



## Joint Worship with Balerno and Currie—25 July 2021

### Opening Prayer

**Rev Dr A J Groenewald**

Good Morning and welcome to our joint service with Currie Kirk, we really hope that you will enjoy your time with us this morning.

**Let us now worship God through our call to worship:**

Let us bring ourselves to God, whatever our age and gifts.

Let us prepare to share in worship, give thanks with all that God shares with us.

Let us open our hearts and minds to know more of God's unconditional love and caring and be ready to share it with others.

May the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with all of you, now and forevermore, Amen.

**Let us pray.**

Lord of all creation, giver of life, we offer ourselves to you. Teach us how to give ourselves to others, generously and wholeheartedly, sharing who we are and what we have.

May we learn to share all the world's resources so that everyone has enough of the good things you provide.

May we always rejoice in your goodness.

We pray this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray.

Our Father, who art in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

For thine is the glory, the power and the kingdom, for ever and ever. Amen



It is with great sadness that we have to intimate the death of

Steve Valvona  
Dolphin Avenue

Please pray for the family

## SCRIPTURE: Acts 12: 1-24—Read by Kay Coull

### Peter's Miraculous Escape From Prison

It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. After arresting him, he put him in prison, handing him over to be guarded by four squads of four soldiers each. Herod intended to bring him out for public trial after the Passover.

So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.

The night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries stood guard at the entrance. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him up. "Quick, get up!" he said, and the chains fell off Peter's wrists.



Then the angel said to him, "Put on your clothes and sandals." And Peter did so. "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me," the angel told him. Peter followed him out of the prison, but he had no idea that what the angel was doing was really happening; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first and second guards and came to the iron gate leading to the city. It opened for them by itself, and they went through it. When they had walked the length of one street, suddenly the angel left him.

Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I know without a doubt that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were hoping would happen."

When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. When she recognised Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

"You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished. Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell James and the other brothers and sisters about this," he said, and then he left for another place.

In the morning, there was no small commotion among the soldiers as to what had become of Peter. After Herod had a thorough search made for him and did not find him, he cross-examined the guards and ordered that they be executed.

### Herod's Death

Then Herod went from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there. He had been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon; they now joined together and sought an audience with him. After securing the support of Blastus, a trusted personal servant of the king, they asked for peace, because they depended on the king's country for their food supply.

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.”

## **Sermon—Rev Tom Blair**

### **Knock, Knock, Who’s There? Acts 12:1-24**

This is one of my absolute favourite Bible stories of all time!!!

Knock, knock, who’s there? There’s no punchline here but for a wonderful Bible story; maybe one you’ve never really had a good chance to examine before.

Peter’s story of a miraculous escape from jail and appearance at the door of Mary, the mother of John Mark, is a tale told on many levels that speaks to us in more ways than we know.

This is a great story. Once you start reading it you want to find out how it all ends. It’s also a meaningful story, for without it the early church wouldn’t have had one of its most important, foundational leaders, Peter.

It’s a story that lives on in our lives. The key metaphor in the story (the open door), invites us into both the drama and humanity of this account, to consider what doors might stand before us, to knock on or to open, awaiting the opportunities that God has in store for us in our lives in his week to come, and beyond.

Details of the story matter; they come step by step. First, as the Christian movement was proving to be a threat to Herod, so then, calling for the support of the Temple High Priest, Jesus’ brother James is executed by the Romans, by the sword. Peter is to be next, now put in prison for his eventual execution. All this takes place during the celebration of Passover; a similar time when Jesus was tried and crucified.

The next scene shifts to a dark prison cell. Whether or not Peter would have been put on trial we’ll never know, because the night before Herod was going to bring him out, he escapes with divine assistance. While Peter sleeps with both arms chained to Roman guards, an angel appears to awaken him, the chains fall away, he puts on his belt and sandals and off he goes! Not realising what is really going on, Peter follows instructions, almost sleepwalking past the guards. When the iron city gate opens of its own accord, Peter acknowledges the source of his amazing rescue. It is the Lord’s doing, too good to be true. Now he has to share the news.

The scene shifts again. Still nighttime, but now in the city, Peter heads to a safe place, the home of Mary, mother of John Mark. She is presumably a widow and wealthy enough to have a home large enough to host a ‘house-church’, with a servant girl to attend to necessary needs. He knocks on the door and the servant girl, Rhoda, comes to open it. (This next part of the scene could come from an old “I Love Lucy” episode!) Whether Rhoda is scared out her wits, surprised beyond belief, or just overly excited, when she opens the door to see Peter standing there, instead of letting him in, she leaves the door locked and runs back to tell the others who she has just seen. (When they tell her that she ‘is out of her mind’, you may well recall a similar claim made by the disciples when the women claimed to have seen Jesus risen from the dead.)

After insisting that it’s indeed Peter and not an apparition or an angel, they go to the door to find that it really is him, and they hear the tale he tells of how the Lord saved him.

The final scene brings us back to Herod, now angry at everyone that his plan was foiled. He travels to his administrative capital in Caesarea where he proceeds to put on a show to demonstrate his supposed power.

According to scholars, what likely happened was this. Herod wanted to 'play God', so he donned a very shiny garment (with metal plates?) and had his voice amplified so that the crowds would take him as greater than a mere human. He apparently did very well at playing God (the people acclaimed him as one.) But doing that has its consequences; violating the first commandment has its downsides. Whether Herod was consumed by intestinal parasites or died of some sort of internal hemorrhage, his end was sudden and surely not pretty. Case closed.

But the word of God prevailed, continued to advance and gained adherents.

That's a first look at the story. Yet there is more than meets the eye.

There are a few underlying and important observations that can be made from this story about the nature of the early church. The church in Jerusalem was clearly not very well connected to either the Jewish or Roman power structure and was consistently persecuted and under pressure in varied forms of severity.

Yet despite these hardships and persecutions, there were clearly some converts of some means, those who owned homes and had servants (or slaves). The social dynamics of the early church was complex and diverse. Even under threat of imprisonment, some people of means were drawn to "the Way," and welcomed others to join them, worshipping together. The early church seems not to have required everyone to give up their property and social divisions that existed in Roman society did not seem to extend into the new Christian communities.

What this story finally means for us is not so much about the past but about our futures. After numerous readings, the most compelling scene for me in this story is not Peter's shackles falling from his wrists, the amazement he experiences in his astonishing release from prison, or even the grisly death that Herod surely had coming to him.

The most memorable scene, regularly replayed in daily life, is the action of the servant girl Rhoda, opening the door for Peter.

Knock, knock—who's there? It's not a punch line to answer, but rather a question for us to live out in our lives. What door is there for you to knock on or open? Which side of the door are you on; are you knocking or opening?

Either way, an opportunity awaits. This is the real question for us today.

There's lots of ways we encounter doors; some much more memorable and important than others. I'll share a couple examples to get you started to think about yours.

Now that it is summer bicycling season, I remember years back when my older brother and I did a cycling tour of Scotland. It was glorious, mostly. We carried our tents and clothes in panniers and camped when we could. One memorable day, though—the rain came down in sheets, sideways. It was so windy we had to walk our bikes, downhill!

There was simply no way that we were going to try to pitch our tent in that kind of weather, so we made it to the nearest town (Elgin, as I remember), and knocked on the door of the first B&B we found. The nicest lady in the world opened the door and let us in, bikes and all. We had a good meal, warm, dry beds—and then clear skies in the morning. I can still remember the look of that door, and the response of that dear lady when she saw the two drenched guys standing at her door ... "Oh dearie, we must do something about the two of you!"

My next example is from the other side of the door. You know how it is that sometimes on Saturday afternoons you get an unexpected knock on your door at home? Who does that? If its not Peter,

miraculously escaped from prison, I'm honestly not so sure if I want to open the door to find out. Is it someone selling magazine subscriptions, soliciting for a local charity, or someone surveying the neighbourhood to petition for a zoning change? In any case, I have to make a deliberate choice to go to the door, open it and be ready to respond. I know that I need to decide what I'm going to do and say before I open the door. Will I keep an open mind, or will I find a way to say "no thank you" as politely and convincingly as I can? (Shutting the door in front of me.)

Opening a door to the unknown means taking a little bit of risk, opening yourself up to new possibilities that aren't of your own making.

Which all leads to the real question behind this story. Who are you in this story? Do you see yourself as a Peter, knocking on a door to make yourself known, or a Rhoda, opening up to a new possibility knocking on your door?

What door awaits you in your life? A new job, a new move, a new friend, a new decision; they happen in more ways than we realise, every day.

What door do you have to open for another? What help can you provide, what comfort can you give; what resources do you have to share?

Who is that knocking?

You know who it is ... It is the Lord, ready to join you on your journey, wherever it is that you will go ... however it is that your journey will take shape. Friends in Christ, be assured, that Jesus knocks, waits, and then joins us in our journeys, always. Amen

## **Prayers for Others—Easter**

God of miracle,  
provider of daily bread,  
word of life and love,  
we thank You for the gift  
of Your Son Jesus,  
We thank You  
for Your endless overflowing grace  
that knows no bounds

We thank You  
that even the the humble labours of our lives and simplest acts of kindness  
are useful to You  
in the service of Your kingdom.

Lord God  
As You heard the cries of Your people  
in the wilderness and fed them bread from heaven,  
as we remember how Jesus nourished Your people  
with words of justice and compassion  
hear us today as we pray for our world.

We pray for those whose daily need  
for food, clean water

and proper shelter goes un-met  
and for those misusing what they have  
in the vain pursuit of pleasure.  
Feed them with a sense of justice and fairness  
That they might stand firm in their right  
To a decent life for all people now.

We pray for those whose lives have been broken  
by violence and crime, conflict and struggle.  
Feed them with courage and anticipation  
of a life beyond the barriers which hold them back.

We pray for those who are sick or sorrowing  
and those who care for and console them.  
We pray especially for those we know personally  
who are facing difficulties at this time  
and who we name in a time of silence

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Fill them, Lord, with Your healing presence  
and remind them of Your promises.  
We pray for those who have lost faith  
in themselves and in You  
and who struggle to find meaning in life.

For those whom Covid has brought great hardship—loss of health or hope  
Heal their sorrows and doubts  
focus their eyes on You, Lord,  
and give them hope for a new day.

We pray for ourselves that we might be filled  
with energy to serve You better in our daily living.  
And that we might, even in our darkest days,  
be reminded that You will never turn away  
Or abandon us.

May we always look to You  
As the one who gives us life.  
All this we ask in Jesus' name.

Amen.

## **Blessing—Andre**

Thank you for sharing worship with us this morning. Receive the blessing of God and go out with his peace.

Lord help us to remain thankful for even the simple things. Keep us focussed on your loving, generous nature so that we can freely share what we have and who we are.

Let us all be cheerful givers and humble receivers but all may have enough to be satisfied and the blessing of God almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with all of you now and forever more.

Amen.

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All sermons from Currie Kirk can be found on the Kirk's website and on YouTube—search Currie Kirk



## Currie & Juniper Green Holiday Club 2021 Prayer news

We are delighted we can have a more normal looking holiday club this year and we would love you to be a part of it and join with us in praying for the week. The club runs Monday 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday 30<sup>th</sup> July and the children will be with us from 10am-12.30pm. We're using SU Scotland's *Jungle Adventure* material this year and are running entirely outdoors (except for toilets!). Below are some points to help guide your prayers.

- ◆ Firstly, rejoice that we can have an in-person holiday club this year! Thank God for his protection and provision so far and ask that would continue for the duration of the club
- ◆ Pray for good weather as we'll be outside the whole time!
- ◆ We have 21 children signed up, two more potentially coming and one space left after that. Give thanks that we are almost fully booked and most children will be there every day.
- ◆ Give thanks for the team of 14 people made up of members from several local churches. We have one trainee and three young leaders as part of our team who we are delighted can join us. Pray for unity within the team and that each person would be given opportunity to use their gifts to serve God.
- ◆ Pray for engagement with the Bible stories and for everyone to meet with God in some way; for each child to know in their hearts and minds that they are deeply loved by God.
- ◆ Pray for relationships to be built quickly, then grow and deepen throughout the week.
- ◆ Pray for final preparations being done and that we would be bold and confident in sharing the Good News.
- ◆ Pray that God would be glorified.

Thank you all for your support and prayers. While we may be the ones who get to run the programme and be with the children, it is of great encouragement and humbling to know that there will be many more people behind the scenes doing such vital work praying for us. I look forward to sharing with you in time what we saw God do during our week together.

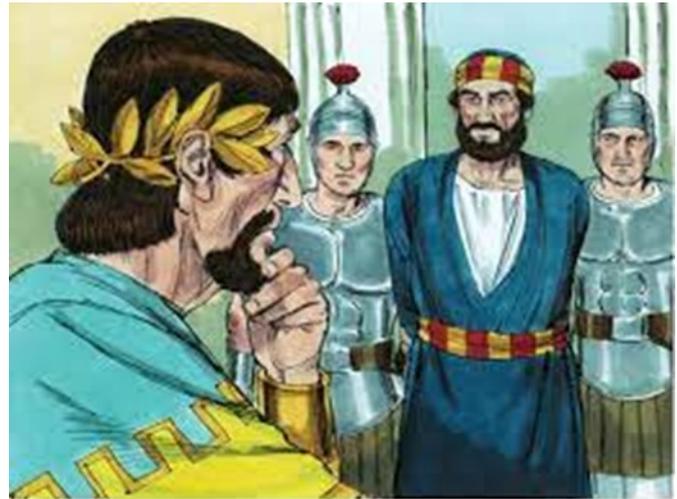
Heather and the *Jungle Adventure* team.

## Peter in prison

These resources are designed to help you explore the Bible as a family together at home while we can't go to church. Be as creative as you want to be and enjoy spending time with each other and with God.

### Prepare yourself...

Let us bring ourselves to God,  
whatever our age and gifts.  
Let us prepare to share in worship,  
giving thanks for all that God  
shares with us.  
Let us open our hearts and minds  
to know more of God's  
unconditional love and care,  
and be ready to share it with  
others.  
**Amen.**



### Question...



What things do you think are impossible?

### Read the Bible...



Today's verses are found in **Acts 12:1-24**. You can read them in a Bible or find them [here](#).

Here's a video of the story: [Peter escapes from prison- Saddleback kids](#)

Herod, the king of the Jewish people, persecuted Christians and ordered the arrest of Peter. Persecution is when a person is treated badly because of their religion, race or political beliefs. The other Christians in the city were afraid so they gathered in one house and hid there. While there they prayed to God. What God did surprised them all..

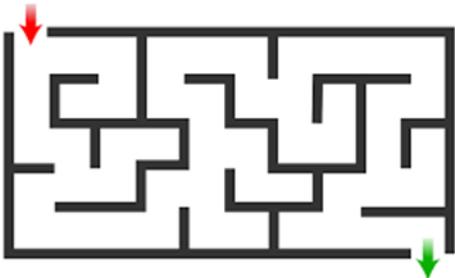
## Talk together...

Does anything surprise you in this story?  
How many miraculous things happen in this story?  
How do you think Peter felt throughout the story?  
What can we learn about God from this story?  
What can we learn about ourselves?  
Can you think of a time you prayed a big miracle-seeking prayer?  
Are there any seemingly impossible situations you want to take to God today?  
Do you think God answers prayer? Why/why not?  
Have you seen God answer prayer?



## Make together...

**Maze:** Create a maze for someone else. You could draw one on paper, use chalk or tape or objects to create one on the ground inside or outside. Can they make it through without going the wrong way?



## Pray together...

When we know nothing is impossible for God it can change the way we pray. Spend some time drawing pictures of what you would like the world to look like. What do you think the world would look like with God completely in charge?  
When you've finished drawing, turn your pictures into prayers, asking God to change the world and make it a better place, like the one he originally created it to be.

## Play together...

### Paper chain race

You'll need strips of paper, tape or glue. Working individually or in teams set a timer and see who can make the longest paper chain in one minute. Count the loops to find out who won.

### Impossible?

You'll need a piece of A4 paper and scissors. Can you make a hole big enough to fit your whole body through without the paper tearing?

If you're not sure it's possible have a look here: <https://blog.doublehelix.csiro.au/climb-through-a-hole-in-a-sheet-of-paper/>

## Praise together...

[This little light of mine](#)

[Hallelu, hallelu](#)

[God is able](#) – Hillsong

[Be strong and courageous](#) – Seeds family worship

[What a mighty God we serve](#)

