

REFLECTION May 3rd 2026 'FOUNDATION STONES OLD & NEW'

Stones are something that we see everywhere we go. In the outback they're very visible, unhidden by brush, on the coast we see them scattered all over the place, large boulders, as well as smaller ones, in rivers they make the bed of some rivers hard to walk upon, and on others they make wonderful visual spectacles. Rocks provide the firm foundation that the moving sands over time just cannot. Rocks are hard, rocks offer stability, rocks offer shelter, rocks offer filtered nourishing and thirst quenching water, rocks built into cairns of community become memorials creating traditions.

When I was looking at the readings for today, my mind travelled back to the Old Testament stories where rocks made all the difference to living well or living poorly.

We can draw connecting lines between 1Peter and John to the ancient but ongoing story of God's people helping us to see what it means to live as a community built on Christ who is our cornerstone. When we remember the miracle of nourishing water from the rock that Moses struck to quench the desert's thirst to stop the people grumbling, and the occasion when the Jordan river opened up so the people could cross on the dry riverbed, led by the Levite's carrying the Ark. God commanded Joshua to have 12 men one from each tribe take 12 stones from the exact spot where the priests stood in the middle of the river. These 12 stones were taken to Gilgal, the first camp, to serve as a reminder to future generations of how God dried up the Jordan, similar to the Red Sea. These stones have become memorial stones and those communities continued old traditions and created new traditions. We see that the rocks aren't a distant symbol but a faithful, ongoing reality in the people's journey. In all these moments, the cornerstone – the Spirit of Jesus Christ, who was there from the very beginning of creation, remains the foundation, the place where life and hope are found even amidst complaints, danger, and times of transition.

Peter's promise about being a living stone in a spiritual house and Jesus' invitation to trust him as the Way, Truth, and Life meet us in these biblical images. The result is a hopeful, practical way of living our days, weeks, months and years to live, serve, and show compassion from a foundation that can't be moved or removed.

Having the image of a strong immovable rock as the foundation of our ID and trust like that found in 1 Peter, we are described as living stones being built into a spiritual house, with Christ as the cornerstone. The image emphasises identity that is secure not because of our effort but because of the dependable ancient and relevant rock which supports us. The rock is more than a metaphor for strength; it's a life-generating presence that provides ongoing nourishment, protection, and direction. John's reading reinforces this stability: Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. He prepares a place for us and reveals the Father to us by the Spirit. In an era of competing voices and opinions, the urgency of news cycles, personal doubts, conflicting advice, when we're asking ourselves which one we prioritise; our community can anchor our conversations, future plans and prayers in the reality that Christ is our rock that undergirds everything. We can begin with a shared practice where we remind one another aloud of who we are in Christ and why that matters as we engage ourselves anew each day.

You know the story of Moses and the rock: faith that questions and receives sustenance in God when the Israelites grumbled, God instructed Moses to strike the rock, and water flowed. That moment isn't just about a miracle. It reveals God's faithfulness to provide when we (God's people) are weary and demanding (and we know just how demanding we are!) In our lives this week, we'll inevitably face a form of thirst; longings for justice, mercy to be enacted, for lasting peace in the

world, and more locally in fractured relationships. The response isn't denial of pain but trust that God can and does provide, sometimes through surprising channels and people. God has used and continues all kinds of people to accomplish God's intentions. We might wonder why that person, but we trust that God has a reason for it. As a community built on the cornerstone, we can model an attitude of open-handed generosity, offering practical help to those who need it, listening without rushing in to fix a problem, taking a moment to think about the situation and panicking, work our way clearly and purposefully through the issue. We can always pray for waters of renewal to flow in families, classrooms, lecture halls, workplaces, and of course neighbourhoods. We also lean into humility: grumbling can reveal our own thirst for power and control. The rock response is gracious provision and patient leadership that points back to the rock, not our own devices.

The Jordan crossing and the Ark involve presence, leadership, and memorials as acts of faith as the Levites carried the Ark to the Jordan's edge, the waters ceased, and the people crossed into the Promised Land. The Ark's presence led the march, 12 people, one from each tribe, paused to remember what happened that day by placing one rock upon another creating a cairn. This is a powerful pattern for us as a community of faith to model. First, comes leadership and presence: Christ is our Ark, God's promised presence with his people, guiding us as we step into an uncertain future, or new ministries such as The Market@TheMeetingPlace, renewed commitments, or community challenges. This is followed by memorials such as All Saints Day, which remind us where we've seen God at work. The cairns weren't trophies but testimonies to God's faithfulness that could be pointed to by future generations whenever fear or forgetfulness threatened trust. So, what can we do this week?

I offer just two things, I'm sure you will have more:

- Name and celebrate small and large 'crossings' in our community, a difficult situation resolves, a relationship healed or a difficult decision made with integrity.
- Establish or refresh memorial activities such as short stories of hope and faith experiences with someone or in a small group such as our bible discussions, WAGS, UCAF, or coffee mornings.

What does it mean to live, serve, and show compassion grounded in Christ as its cornerstone and the Spirit's help as promised by Jesus in a Christ centered community acting from three positions, hope, mercy and witness?

I begin with hope, which is simply starting the day being mindful we are built on the rock who sustains life. let that truth shape how we approach stress, deadlines and disappointments. Our response to others comes from a place of steadiness rather than reactivity, offer encouragement that points beyond circumstances to God's faithful leadership.

Something we all familiar with is intercessory prayer Peter uses the expression of royal priesthood. Intercessory prayer is when we intercede, bless, and make sacrifices of service for others. We can do this easily throughout the days as we pray for those around us whom we love, those who are carrying burdens in their lives. Small prayers and acts of service can become a steady stream of water in the desert creating a firm base like an immovable rock.

Being inclusive with our hospitality and compassion. The cornerstone unites a diverse people into one household. This isn't just a form of social kindness, it's a living sign of the gospel, God's welcome extended to all who come to Christ.

Build and sustain just, healing work. Following Christ means pursuing justice and healing for the broken places of our society. The rock foundations our actions, making them durable across seasons of scarcity or abundance.

Be honest and truthful in love, model truth that leads to life. In a world of conflicting claims, present the way, truth, and life with humility and clarity. Sharing hope and listening to the stories of others with curiosity. Our confidence sits not in winning others over but in guiding people towards the life Jesus offers, that life is robust, eternal, and full of grace and mercy.

What we can do is to create quiet testimonies of hope. Our daily rhythms can be beacons of light. A patient explanation to a family or friend who are watching and listening to what we do, say, and our attitude towards things. These quiet, steady acts testify that the rock is real and that Jesus right with us, Jesus is near.

I'd like to finish with the imagery of Moses hitting the rock, the Jordan crossing, and the cairn left as a testament of the far bank reminding us that the rock undergirds every step of the journey. Christ is the cornerstone upon which our identity is built. He is the Way, the Truth, and Life. Christ is the cornerstone upon which our identity is built. He is the way that leads us through the wilderness, the Truth that dispels fear, and the Life that nourishes our souls. Through the days, weeks, months and years that we have left, may we live as a community formed by the cornerstone. A community formed by that particular cornerstone. A community that listens for God's voice, intercede for one another, welcome the stranger, work for justice, speak the truth in love, and bear witness to a hopeful reality. Jesus is our rock, our firm foundation, and our true home.

Amen