

WEST EPPING UNITING CHURCH

Our Vision:

*We are people sent to share the love,
hope and compassion of Jesus Christ with
all the world*



Sunday 23 December 2018

Welcome 환영합니다

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MAKING ROOM IN THE INN

When the heavily pregnant Mary arrived in Bethlehem, together with her husband, Joseph, there was no place for them to stay. After making that arduous 130 kilometre journey from Nazareth through the dangerous hills of Samaria and the parched wilderness of Judea the "full house" signs were up all over town. There was no room for them in the inn.

We all know the story. Mary gives birth to Jesus in a stable out the back. It was, to be honest, an inappropriate, dirty place – a place fit only for animals. But this scene has been romanticised, idealised and even glamorised as mother adores her new born child with a placid, reverent Joseph looking on. Charming animals encircle the family as curious shepherds gather. Mysterious wise men arrive from the east to pay homage as a glowing star hovers overhead beaming a sublime light over the whole scene.

Now, don't get me wrong. I am not trying to spoil or denigrate this lovely story. But let's be honest. Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus were effectively treated like second-class citizens. There was no private birthing suite provided here. Neither was there even the most basic form of hospitality. Mary, Joseph and the baby Jesus were simply put out the back with the livestock and the haystacks. Here they had to fend for themselves.

This raises real questions for us all. Are the "full house" signs still up today? If Jesus was to come among us, would we say there's no room in the inn? Would we suggest Jesus pitch his tent in the backyard, or better still, try the homeless shelter down the road?

As we celebrate Christmas ask yourselves these questions. Is there room for Jesus in my life? Does Jesus rate a mention amidst all the shopping, the celebrations and the holidaying that goes on now? Is there a place of honour for the Christ child at your Christmas table?

Is there room in your hearts and in your budget for those who are doing it tough this Christmas – the lonely, the homeless, the hungry, the persecuted and the displaced?

Don't put the "full house" sign up this year. Make room in your busy lives for Jesus and for all those Jesus loves.

Whatever you do, don't put Jesus second. Don't put Jesus out the back. Don't throw Jesus the crumbs.

Rather, give him first place in your lives this Christmas.

Rev. John Barr



We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land upon which we gather, the Wallumedegal people of the Eora nation and give thanks for their care of the land over many generations.

PRAYER POINTS

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas pray for:

- ✚ The people of Bethlehem as continuous tensions occur between Palestinians and Israelis. Pray for peace in the Holy Land and for justice for all people.
- ✚ Communities around the world impacted by violence and war. Pray especially for Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, South Sudan and Afghanistan.
- ✚ The Christmas Bowl Appeal as it reaches out to give dignity and a future to communities in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific. Pray that we will give generously.
- ✚ World leaders as they address issues of climate change, the refugee crisis, economic justice and social reforms. Pray that they may have wisdom and compassion.
- ✚ The President of the Uniting Church, Dr Diedre Palmer, the Moderator of the Synod, Rev Simon Hansford, the Chair Person of the Presbytery, Rev Geoff Stevenson and the leaders of West Epping Uniting Church. Pray for wise counsel and a courageous vision.
- ✚ People with needs, those who are sick, lonely, grieving, sad, over-burdened or hurt. Pray they may receive comfort, care and real sense of hope this Christmas.

Prayer for Today

Gracious God,

At this Christmas time, help us to make room for Jesus in our hearts and to honour him as Lord and Saviour.

Challenge us to make room for others and to give generously to those who have so little.

Lead us on as a people fired up with courage and as a community filled with hope as we bear witness to the Good News of your gift of salvation. Amen.



CHRISTMAS WORSHIP



24 December Christmas Eve

Worship, 7pm

Family Service sharing stories of Christmas with Carols
9pm Service of Carols with Communion

25 December Christmas Day

Worship, 8.30am

CSI Worship, 11am

Sunday 30 December to Sunday 27 January

Worship, 9am

Community News

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT SEX AND MARRIAGE?

Rev John Barr will conduct two study sessions on key texts of the Bible related to sex and marriage. This is an opportunity for all of us to reflect on God's Word in relation to important issues.

- ◆ **Sunday afternoon 20th January:**
2.30pm to 4.30pm in the Cottage
- ◆ **Tuesday evening 22nd January:**
7.30pm to 9.30pm in the Cottage

ALL WELCOME

PRAYER GROUP ~ If you would like prayer for yourself or for others please contact Lois Rees, Helen Campbell, Annabelle Avern or Rev John Barr who convene a weekly Prayer Group each Thursday in the Cottage 12.15-1.00pm. **During this time we pray for all members of the West Epping Community and for the needs of others.**

New members of the Prayer Group are always welcome.



8.00am SERVICE ~ MORNING TEA ROSTER 2019

A new roster will be prepared shortly and I would appreciate knowing who is willing to continue next year, and to hear from any one who would be prepared to be part of this outreach. Working in pairs, it is not an onerous task, to fill the urns, set out the mugs, tea/coffee, sugar etc. and provide milk and some biscuits. This is an opportunity to enjoy social fellowship with other members of our Church. Unfortunately we will be losing the help of some friends who have provided this service for many years, and we thank them for their faithful and willing help.

Enquiries: Margaret Wilson 9871 5649

STAFF NEWS

Helen Tattersall, Office Administrator, will be on leave from Friday 21 December to Monday 14 January. During that time the Church Office will be closed. However, urgent enquiries can be referred to Rev John Barr 0457 879 099.

Rev John Barr will on leave from Monday 8 January to Tuesday 15 January.

During John's leave Rev Greg Woolnough (Epping Uniting Church) will be available for urgent pastoral matters contact: 0407 291 958, or gregwool91@gmail.com



THE CHRISTMAS BOWL

On Christmas Day or on one of the three Sundays following Christmas you are invited to make an offering to the Christmas Bowl Appeal. This is a program of the National Council of Churches in Australia. Funds raised are used to support communities in Vanuatu to combat natural disasters, in Pakistan to provide education for girls, in Jordan to provide relief for Syrian refugees, in Zimbabwe to assist communities in drought and in Bangladesh to support the displaced Rohingya community.

Place your contribution in an envelope marked "Christmas Bowl" and put it in the offering on Christmas Day or on any Sunday until 13th January.



Jesus
THE REAL
CHRISTMAS
PRESENCE!!

Micah 5:2-5a

But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah,
who are one of the little clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me
one who is to rule in Israel,
whose origin is from of old,
from ancient days.
Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labour has brought forth;
then the rest of his kindred shall return
to the people of Israel.
And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord,
in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God.
And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth;
and he shall be the one of peace.

Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, 'Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leapt for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfilment of what was spoken to her by the Lord.'



COMING WORSHIP SERVICES

SUNDAY 30th DECEMBER at 9am

Bible Reading: Luke 2:41-52 – "And all who heard him were amazed"
Worship Leader: Doug Blunden
Preacher: Rev John Barr

SUNDAY 6th JANUARY at 9am with HOLY COMMUNION

Bible Readings: Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12 – "Wise men from the East"
Worship Leader: Jan Venn-Brown
Preacher: Rev John Barr

SUNDAY 13th JANUARY at 9am

Bible Reading: Isaiah 43:1-7
Worship Leader: Lois Rees
Guest Speaker: Andy Corkill from ACT for Peace.

Andy will speak about the important work of international aid and development that is carried out through ACT for Peace, an agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

This includes the Christmas Bowl, an appeal West Epping supports every year. Note, contributions to the Christmas Bowl can be placed in the offering each Sunday on Sunday 30 December, Sunday 6 January or Sunday 13 January.

MID-WEEK COMMUNION Tuesday 22nd JANUARY at 10am

NOTE: Mid-Week Communion is celebrated on the third Tuesday of the month. However, for January only, Mid-Week Communion will be celebrated on the fourth Tuesday.

Closure of Ministry for Rev John Barr

Sunday 27 January at 9am

Following the Service we will move to the Maurice Davies Hall for fellowship and Brunch.

All you need to do is come as catering is being organised by the Welcome and Hospitality Team.

Contributions towards a gift for John can be placed in a box visible in the church foyer or by bank transfer to the West Epping account with the description John B farewell. Bank details: Westpac BSB 032 081 Account 961263.



Diary Dates

- ◆ **Monday 24 December** ~ Christmas Eve, 7pm & 9pm
- ◆ **Tuesday 25 December** ~ Christmas Day, 8.30am
- ◆ **Sunday 30 December** ~ Worship, 9am

2019

- ◆ **Sunday 6 January to Sunday 27 January** ~ Worship, 9am
- ◆ **Tuesday 22 January** ~ Mid-week Communion, 10am
- ◆ **Friday 18 January** ~ Friday Discovery, 10am
- ◆ **Sunday 27 January** ~ Closure of Ministry Service for Rev John Barr, 9am
- ◆ **Sunday 3 February** ~ Worship 8am & 10am with HC
- ◆ **Saturday 13 April** ~ Mystery Coach Tour
- ◆ **Saturday 4 May** ~ West Epping Women's Retreat

PRAYERS

If you would like to know of some specific names of people with particular pastoral needs to pray for, please **contact Annabelle Avern** (member of the Pastoral Care Team) on 9484 4146, preferably on weekday evenings. Alternately, you are welcome to come along to the Prayer Group that meets on Thursdays at 12:15pm.



For Pastoral Care needs please contact:

Rev John Barr 0457 879 099

West Epping Uniting Church uses information and news provided by its members, adherents and officers for the purposes of conducting its pastoral ministry. In the course of that ministry, material published in this bulletin may reach an audience wider than the membership of the congregation.

What's on next two weeks!

Christmas Eve 24 December	7.00pm 9.00pm	Family Service with Stories & Carols Carol service with HC
Christmas Day 25 December	8.30am 11.00am	Worship CSI Worship
Sunday 30 December	9.00am	Worship
Tuesday 1 Jan 2019	9.00am	CSI New Year's Day Service
Sunday 6 January	9.00am 5.30pm	Worship HC CSI Worship

Serving next Sunday 30 December

	9.00am
Welcomers	Norma Perry Thelma Marshall
Stewards	Heather Baker David MacGregor
Ministers Assistant	Margaret Leivesley
Reader	June Blunden
Prayer Ministry	Sue Elliott
Prayers for Others	John Barr
Sound/Computer	Phil Chapple
Flowers	

CARDS ~ 'Gifts of Joy' cards in support of Steps with Hope, The Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) project and Joy Balazo's Peace project are on sale in the Maurice Davies Hall after the service. They range in price from \$10 – feeding a child, offering a Christmas treat or buying a laying chook, through to \$360 – to give a high school child an education for a year.



West Epping Uniting Church is a member of an Ecumenical Covenant with the Anglican Parish of Epping, the Catholic Parish of Epping and Carlingford, Epping Baptist Church and Epping Uniting Church.



Minister

Rev John Barr 0457 879 099

Office Administrator

Helen Tattersall 9868 3574

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Friday 8.30am—12.30pm

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