

WEST EPPING UNITING CHURCH

Our Vision:

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



Newsletter

Sunday 11 April 2021

Readings

Acts 4:32-35

Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.



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.

Geoff's Reflection

2nd Sunday after Easter

Known By the Scars of Life!

I looked down this morning and felt my left index finger. It felt odd, as always, with a ridge across the inside first joint. It is a scar left after a door closed very heavily on the finger, jamming it, cutting it open and hurting like all get up! I remember the incident well because it occurred about 20 minutes before a wedding when I was trying to organise things and was distracted. A strong gust of wind, the door swung closed whilst my hand was there and 'ouch!' With pain throbbing through my finger and blood coursing down I washed it, wrapped it tightly in tissue and held it tight whilst I tried to work out the next step. Things to do, blood to stop and pain to control. I found a couple of band aids that could be tightly wrapped around my finger and though it throbbed, it was controllable. The wedding happened and, though distracted, I got through it reasonably well and everyone was happy. My finger took a lot longer to restore itself to normality and though it functions well, there is a good scar to remind me of the incident.

Scars are very present across my hands, feet and body. Scars from accidents, cuts, surgery all appear relentlessly reminding me of vulnerable moments. My scars are small compared to those of others who wear the harshness of life on their bodies, like neon signs of struggle and pain. Scars define us in many ways and point to who we are, what we've done and what we've suffered. They defile the body and reveal our woundedness.

Scars are more than physical and can run deep. Emotional and psychological scars often point to the deepest pain and suffering in our lives, wounds that are more than skin deep. Such scars enter our minds, our emotions, our being and leave us wounded with scar tissue that never truly heals. Scar tissue is made of different stuff to what was originally there - it isn't as flexible, won't grow hair, won't tan... It is stronger and holds the wound together. Scars fill a gap, a break, a wound, a hole and hold our being together but in a different way. Scars are left when a wound heals over; when the wound is treated and cared for, what remains is a scar.

It is interesting that as I talk with others, visit people in congregations and the community and especially enter into deeper conversations about who we are, it is the scars that most deeply define our lives and speak to who we are. Whilst we all have triumphs and great joys shared, it is the scars that help us define who we are - most often because it is the struggle of life that brings change, growth, character... We learn to recognise one another and know each other by the scars. I haven't read it but apparently, in The Odyssey (Book xix) there is a part where Odysseus returns home after years of wandering - he is disguised as an old man and is not recognised (even by his wife and son). That night an aged nurse of Odysseus, Eurycleia, bathes him, thinking him to be an old stranger visiting the night. She recognises the scar on his leg - the same one he had in his infancy. She didn't recognise him until she saw the scar!

In our Gospel reading this week (John 20:19-31), Jesus was known by his scars. The disciples recognised him by the scars on his hands and feet and in his side! They don't know him until he shows them his scars!

Thomas isn't there and when they tell him, he says that unless he sees the scars he cannot believe! Why the scars? Why not the glory of resurrection...???? A week later Jesus appears and offers Thomas what he needs to believe - his scars! The disciples know Jesus by his scars, his wounds. They believe because they see the scars. Even resurrection triumph doesn't erase the scars of Good Friday.

Some Christians, some churches, say or suggest that Christianity will replace all the pain of life with endless joy and peace. When you follow Jesus, all pain will be wiped away, they suggest. But the reality is there are scars that remain. Jesus still had his scars and so do we! We are known, or recognised, by our scars...

When I was doing a course at RNSH and I was a Ward Chaplain, I visited many people. There was one elderly and very sick man I visited a few times. He wasn't able to talk for long, sometimes not at all. But generally his wife and daughter were around. I remember on my first visit speaking with them - particularly the daughter who did most of the talking while her mother held her husband's hand.

She was saying how they came every day, she would drop her mother up in her lunch hour and come back after work... I said something about how that is so emotionally draining and tiring - I remembered when Mum was in hospital during her battle with cancer. She asked a little about that and so I told a bit of the story. As I spoke I noticed a change in her. She became more animated and her mind was ticking over. Finally she said, "You've been there haven't you? You've travelled this road?" I said yes and it was as if she suddenly recognised me - she knew me by my scars. No longer was I a chaplain who would politely listen and offer some support and reassuring words... I was a fellow traveller; I had walked the same path as her and I knew something of what it was like. She didn't have to explain everything to me, I knew. We will be known by our scars; as Jesus, the one we follow, was known by his scars.

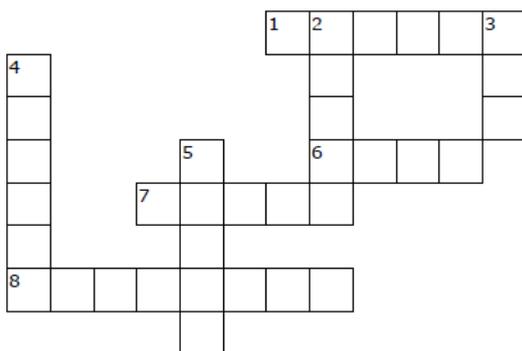
We are wounded healers when we allow our scars and life experience to change us and reach out to others who know our pain and struggle, the path we've trodden. There was a cardiologist who treated many people for heart disease, told them what to do and what not to do. Then he had bypass surgery and suddenly knew what it was like and heard his previous advice... for what it was. He then approached his patients as one with the scars, who understood from personal experience and it made a great difference!!

There was a woman who was assaulted in her own back yard at 10.00 in the morning. Through a good counsellor, a loving husband and family, she made her way back. One day she called up her minister and told him that as part of her therapy, her counsellor wanted her to tell someone, other than her family or her minister, what had happened to her. Who would she tell her story to? She told the minister she wanted to tell Joe Smith. Joe Smith? He was a sometimes recovering, often not, alcoholic. Over four years the minister had seen Joe hold and lose many jobs. Wouldn't you prefer to tell another woman or someone else enquired the minister? Why do you want to tell Joe Smith? She replied that Joe knew what it was like to go to hell and live to tell about it!

We know the scars of our own being and the scars of Jesus are likewise embraced into the grace and love of God where our vulnerability becomes a strength and a grace before a broken world where love heals but leaves it's suffering signs.

Rev Geoff Stevenson

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

1. The disciple who would not believe without seeing
6. An entrance into a building or room
7. A pointed and headed fastener designed to be pounded into wood
8. Unwilling to believe that something is true

DOWN

2. The body parts at the end of the arms
3. To observe with your eyes
4. Not open
5. To believe in something for which there is no proof

FAITH	THOMAS	CLOSED	NAILS
HANDS	SEE	DOUBTING	DOOR

Sharing Prayers we prayed on Easter Sunday

Bringing Christ's light to the world

- ◆ Thank you that vaccines have been developed. May the developed countries be generous in sharing with the less developed world that has suffered most.
- ◆ Pray that the good news of the Christian message will spread around the world.
- ◆ May we give our life in service and love to all people. Christ is Risen. Praise the Lord!
- ◆ Freedom, peace in Burma, people of Gaza, Covid vaccine
- ◆ Lord enlighten us to accept your forgiveness this Easter day.
- ◆ God will never leave us or forsake us. We must put our trust in him. May he bless and keep you in his loving care.
- ◆ Dear God, guide them, bless them give them light, please lead them under your shelter. Amen
- ◆ May they know that they are love by those at WEUC.
- ◆ That as we remember this Lenten journey our gifts will make a small difference in some one else's life.
- ◆ May this gift bless you.
- ◆ God be with you.
- ◆ May the world come to know God's never ending love and grace.
- ◆ I pray for a more equitable distribution of resources especially in the third world.
- ◆ We pray that you will have hope and happiness in your life and we pray that we may be able to show love and support through our giving.
- ◆ Dear God, please multiply these gifts that those who receive them may have abundant life. Amen
- ◆ To bring peace to the middle east and from there to spread throughout the world.
- ◆ Again and again we life up those who work in these places doing your will. Amen
- ◆ Father God, I pray children around the world will know love, peace and hope. Amen
- ◆ Dear God, may your world and love be evident in every corner of the world. Amen
- ◆ I pray that God's light and love shines throughout the world. That we, as custodians of this world look after each other and the environment within which we live. Amen



A Quote for Today

Being with GOD is like owning everything, without owning anything

The Lord God is sun, light and riches.

The spiritually poor are now rich.

The pure in heart see God.

The tired find rests.

The burdened are comforted,

Oh perfect beauty, truth and righteousness that complete Love.

This is heaven. This is the holy vision.

("The pearl of God" Bishop Martin LÖnnebo)

Join us on line Sundays at 8am & 10am

We do hope you will be able to join us on Zoom

[Zoom Meeting Link](#)

Telephone 02-8015-6011

Meeting ID 864-749-2332 passcode 2121

Or watch on our Youtube channel

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNf7ULm92n4lwV43xXykEWA>

The service at 10am will be a hybrid service.

Everyone is welcome to attend the 10am hybrid service and there will be morning tea following the service.

Lent Projects

Donation slips for the Lenten projects are available in the church foyer or email the office for one. The last year has been very difficult for everyone, but our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world have had an even harder struggle. Please pray and consider how your donation can help bring a change that will make a huge difference in their lives.



Sunday 18 April

Mission Planning Process with Carlingford

On the 18th of April, both the Carlingford and West Epping congregations will be gathering together at the Centre for Ministry to engage in a mission planning process based on Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI is a strength-based tool that seeks to understand the organisation's DNA through the re-telling of significant stories before taking the time to think and pray about discerning the will of God for the future. In order to best engage with this process, it would be helpful if you could reflect upon the following question before coming to the event:

"Tell me a story about a time you saw God clearly at work in West Epping/Carlingford Uniting Church? What happened? Who was involved? Why was it significant?"

If you're planning on coming, or want further information, please contact Morris Ross (9873 3713), John Planner (9680 7525) or Karen Sugunanathan. The start time will be provided in due course.

Closure of Ministry Service for Rev Tammy Hollands

On Sunday 2 May at 6:00pm we will be saying goodbye to Tammy, Owen, Natalia, Lilliana and Tristan. Please come and help thank and farewell the Hollands' as they leave the West Epping family and move onto the next chapter of their lives.

MAKE SOMEONE FEEL
LIKE A MILLIONAIRE...
PHONE-A-FRIEND TODAY!



Lamington Drive

Ladies Fellowship are now accepting orders for the next Lamington Drive. Cream-filled, or plain lamingtons ~ \$15 dozen

Orders close 22 April.

Phone orders to: Joan Ross 9873 3713

Please collect your order after 10am on 28 April from the Maurice Davies Hall.



Service Sunday 18 April

Service next Sunday - Time etc to be advised.

There will a new roster out soon.

Inter Church Men's Fellowship

Dinner on Monday 19 April at 6.30pm. The speaker will be Hans Kunnen, sharing his dramatic and emotional experience as an Australian on his own in New York during the coordinated terrorist aircraft attack on the twin tower buildings.

Martin Thomas will now present his subject on "Nuclear Energy the answer to Australia's greenhouse problem", on Monday 10 May.

Friday Discovery

Our group for over 55's ~ Join us on Friday 16 April at 10am for Morning Tea. Ron Dunstan will share with us his trips to Poland. All Welcome.

Enquiries: Joan Ross 9873 3713

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 0428 368 870, preferably on weekday evenings.



Community Aid Food Collection

This Sunday 11 April. Please bring your collected food items to the 10am service. Many thanks!



Church Office

The church office will be closed next week (Thursday and Friday) as Helen is on leave.

Something to Crow About!

101 Proverbs for living

Proverbs 27

We all belong to each other.
We all need each other.
We must, therefore, set about
to love each other.

Paul C Brownlow



Minister

Rev Tammy Hollands (on leave)

Seniors Ministry

Mrs Lyn Graham 0412 990 949

Office Administrator

Helen Tattersall 0408 972 957

Safe Church Contact Person

Erica Harrison 0409 044 923

Church Office

Office Hours

Email

Website

Facebook

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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.