

# 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 December 2022

## Readings

### Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;  
like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly,  
and rejoice with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,  
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the Lord,  
the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands,  
and make firm the feeble knees.

Say to those who are of a fearful heart,  
'Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,  
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you.'

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,  
and the ears of the deaf unstopped;  
then the lame shall leap like a deer,  
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness,  
and streams in the desert;

the burning sand shall become a pool,  
and the thirsty ground springs of water;

the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp,  
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there,

and it shall be called the Holy Way;

the unclean shall not travel on it,

but it shall be for God's people;

no traveller, not even fools, shall go astray.

No lion shall be there,

nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;

they shall not be found there,

but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;  
they shall obtain joy and gladness,  
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

### Matthew 11:2-11

When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?' Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way before you."

Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.



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.

## Moderator's Disaster Appeal GIVE GENEROUSLY THIS CHRISTMAS

New South Wales has been impacted by multiple weather systems over the past 12 months. This has caused prolonged flooding that continues in both the Western and Southern parts of the state.

With many communities experiencing continuous or repeat flooding, the Disaster Response Chaplains Network is on the ground, assisting at evacuation centres and caring for those whose trauma from ongoing weather events is unlike anything that Chaplains have seen before.

With 22 current emergency warnings, 33 evacuation centres established and 1651 evacuees being housed in emergency accommodation, families across the state will be in dire need of help during this Christmas period.

Please pray for these communities and give to the Moderator's Appeal if you can by visiting the website:

<https://nswact.uca.org.au/giving/moderators-appeal/>



## Preparedness Backpacks

Items needed for the **Preparedness Backpacks in the Hawkesbury Region.**

They currently have 500 backpacks to fill and more to come.

Some items suggested for more vulnerable residents are:-

- Torch (crank or battery operated)
- Radio (hand crank or battery operated)
- 1L bottles of water
- Power bank
- Batteries
- Sanitiser
- Disinfectant wipes
- Whistle
- Dust mask
- Solar charger
- Duct tape
- Emergency blanket
- Water purification tablets/drops



For further enquiries  
please phone **Lyn Graham 0412 990 949**

**Items can be left at the church in the box in the foyer.**



## Christmas Cards

The **Mission Team** will be selling their **Giving Hope Christmas Cards** each Sunday after worship. These will be raising money to support projects through **UnitingWorld, Act for Peace** and the **OVC Project in Mwandi.**



## Christmas Bowl

Since it was founded by Rev Frank Byatt in 1949, the Christmas Bowl has brought together committed Australian Christians with dedicated local partners around the world, to give hope to people uprooted by conflict and disaster. When Rev Byatt sat down to his Christmas dinner all those years ago, he knew millions of people were starving in war-ravaged Europe. And he was compelled to offer help. He put a Bowl of Remembrance on his Christmas dinner table and asked his loved ones to place a gift in it to 'share your good dinner with hungry children in other lands'. Frank couldn't have foreseen how his simple act of compassion that evening would grow into the powerful Christmas Bowl tradition now celebrated in thousands of churches across Australia. And he couldn't have known how much it would be needed in our world today.

Christmas Bowl envelopes are now available, or [give directly](#)



 You will always be treated with *respect and compassion* when you choose to Speak Out

 **SpeakOut**  
IN CONFIDENCE

## Geoff's Reflection

### The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent

#### What Do We Come Seeking?

A few years ago I was asked to speak at a local Community Carols by Candlelight event. I arrived early and wandered into the oval near the centre of the town, where there were families gathered around food and drink, children's rides and games and a large stage where there was entertainment before the main gig began. The backdrop was raging fires in the mountains beyond as the bushfires of 2019 raged uncontrollably. I wandered and wondered what brought these people out this night? It was a regular, annual event and well organised but what was it really about? What did they expect to hear, see, experience in this night, this carols by candlelight?

As time drew near for the main event to commence, I went to the backstage area and received my instructions regarding microphones, stage positioning – and timing! I had 2-3 minutes, keep it tight! I had wrestled with what to say in by abbreviated timeframe. How does one speak into the mysterious and profound story of Christmas and God's grace in 2-3 minutes? I was also realistic and experienced enough to recognise most people would be tuned out for most of the night. So it was. I spoke into a diverse crowd of people, largely engaged in their conversations around food and drink or children playing. There were those who were either focussed and listening or at least being respectful and feigning attention. My time soon elapsed, I descended from the stage as the show rolled on. I wandered amongst the throng as the sky darkened and the glow of distant fires filled the horizon to the west. I wandered and watched as carols were sung and solos offered and rhetoric around love and peace rolled effortlessly from the MC and entertainers delivering their schtick.

I wondered, again in yet another year, what these people came out expecting to hear or see or experience in this season called Christmas? What did people come to the Carols for and did they have any sense of the God-presence in the story, songs, or the gathered community, celebrating? Did they expect God in Christmas or want to hear the profound and timeless story that turns everything upside down? Sometimes I think we are happy enough with the sanitised, sentimentalised story of a cute baby in a cattle stall with lovely cows and sheep looking on and angels in the sky and a pretty night of wonder that soon disappears, consumed by a different reality of our lives. What did they come out for and what did they find in this night of story and song?

It's a question that Jesus asks a crowd in this week's part of Matthew's story of Jesus (Matthew 11:2-11). It begins, though, with John the Baptist in a prison cell. Time has moved on from our story last week where he was presented as an eccentric, prophetic figure in the backblocks of Judea breathing judgement and repentance and inviting people out of their lives and into a new way grounded in God's vision for a renewed world. He prepared the way for the one who would come, who was greater and would baptise not with water but with Spirit and fire and carried a winnowing fork to thrash out the grain from the chaff. The chaff would burn in the endless fires. Harsh, tough rhetoric that challenged the status quo and breathed judgement onto the powerful.

This week, time has passed and the radical firebrand in languishing in a subterranean cell. What has happened to the vision, the belief, the expectation that John proclaimed and prepared for? He sends his disciples to Jesus asking, 'Are you the expected one or should we wait for someone else?' In this John vocalises our own questions, doubts and fears. In that moment (or moments) when our world rolls on its axis or turns upside down, and we are left confused, desperate, fearful and lost in the deep pain and challenge of life, John's questions arise in our being. 'Are you the one or should we expect another?' God are you really there or is there something else to believe in, trust in, hope in?

John's disciples approach Jesus with his question and Jesus invites them to reply to John testifying to what they have seen and heard – *"the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."* This is what that Matthew's story has described as Jesus' mission and ministry. It is also how the prophetic figure, Isaiah, describes God's work in the world – the presence of God's Reign is characterised when eyes are opened to see, ears hear, the lame get up and walk the journey of this way, those who are dead in their lives, live and there is good news proclaimed that is life-giving and renewing for all people but particularly the poor of the Earth. Jesus is effectively saying to John that his expectations of a top-down explosion of power taking on power with the same violent force is all wrong. God doesn't impose justice or cleanse the world from above but works below, from within and through people, transforming human life who then impact their world with the same transforming power that is humble and gracious love. Transformed hearts and minds, transforming the world

through acts of generosity, kindness, inclusive belonging and working for peace and justice – that seeks to ensure everyone has enough and no-one too little.

Jesus speaks into the crowd – ‘and what did you go out to see or hear or experience in John?’ What were you expecting or hoping for? What did you hear, receive, do? This ministry of John’s was profound and deep but deeper still is the Reign of God that arises in our midst, from the deep irresistible love that holds all things and touches the deep yearning at the very centre of each human life.

What do we come to Christmas to see, hear, or experience? What do we expect? Is there an expectation that we will encounter the Living God in the music and stories, the gatherings, sacred and secular, where stories of life are shared and we sit in one another’s presence? Do we expect to encounter the face of the Christ in the face of another, known or unknown, friend or foe?

When Christmas comes, with the inbreaking wonder of the Spirit of Christ through everything, what is it we expect to see or hear? Will the message, the story of Christmas remain sentimental, neat and controlled, ordered like the Christmas tree in the corner that will be neatly packed away come January? Do we want to radical, world-changing, life-confronting story that will challenge our belief systems, politics, culture and self-perceptions? Are we willing to hear and own the critique that Christmas may bring to our own lives and priorities, inviting, challenging, us to love more deeply and profoundly, generously and sacrificially?

I thought of that Carols event where I delivered my benign 2-3 minute message to a crowd oblivious and wondered, against threatening backdrop of lethal flames, what did they, we, I come to Christmas seeking? Did I/we experience and hear Christ in Christmas?

The link to the video reflection is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VbUOK9Vdsis>

*Rev Geoff Stevenson*



### Inter-church Men’s Fellowship

Monday 12 December at 10am. Morning Tea with a taste of Christmas, and sharing of Christmas experiences. Cost \$10.00. Bookings by Wednesday 7 December to Bruce Sheldrick  
[b.sheldrick@optusnet.com.au](mailto:b.sheldrick@optusnet.com.au)



### Christmas puddings

Puddings will be available for collection on Sunday 11 December after the 9.30 service. Thank you  
Enquiries: Carolyn 9871 27661



**We know it can be difficult to  
Speak Out, but help is available.**

CONFIDENTIAL | SECURE | ANONYMOUS



For more information go to:  
[speakout.uca.org.au](http://speakout.uca.org.au)

INDEPENDENT AND CONFIDENTIAL HOTLINE

**1800 951 145**



## Thanksgiving & Remembrance Service

Wednesday 14 December, 7.45pm

## Carols in the Car Park

Christmas Eve, Saturday 24 December

Join us for a BBQ tea at 6pm, followed by carols at 7pm.

## Christmas Day

Sunday 25 December, 8.30am

### mainly music news

Thanks to the members of the congregation who donated money for the bibles given to the children starting school next year and for the Christmas books which tell the story of Christmas that the other children received. We had a fabulous last session for the year.

We start again in 2023 on Wednesday 8 February if you would like to tell others about us.

We thank Glenn and Erica for the construction and painting of the photo board and Mia for the fine painting decoration! Have a look at the images! The children all made a card with their individual photo on it.

How blessed we are as a team to share God's love with our community!

*Elizabeth*



### West Epping Uniting Church Christmas Party

**This Sunday,  
11 December at 5pm**  
in the Maurice Davies Hall.

Join us for all age  
worship and singing,  
followed by a party tea,  
that will finish by 6.30pm

All are welcome.



## Thank you!

A big thank you to those who donated socks and undies for the homeless, in our recent collection. It was a wonderful effort, with Carlingford Uniting Church, supporting the work of Parramatta Mission.



## Prayer for Today

Holy God,  
scripture tells us that you came to Joseph through  
an angel— loud and clear, impossible to miss.

Scripture also tells us that Joseph listened.  
He rearranged his life to follow your invitation.

God, we long for that—  
*all of that.*

We long to hear your voice—loud and clear,  
impossible to miss.

We long for invitations to something more,  
something deeper.

And we long to be like Joseph and find the  
courage to follow.

So clean out our ears. Brush the dust off our hearts.

Trace us back to our roots—back to Joseph—who  
heard and followed.

With gratitude we listen. Amen.

- sanctifiedart.org -

Worship this Sunday  
at 9.30am will be a hybrid service.

Everyone is welcome to attend  
or 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](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCNf7ULm92n4lwV43xXykEWA)

## Mid-week devotion

Join us on Wednesdays at 10am on zoom led by  
Pastor Lyn Graham.

Join Zoom Meeting at 10am

[https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/91952761718?  
pwd=WmtNRFhKbDV3OTZLaVJVRWk4VGvkZz09](https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/91952761718?pwd=WmtNRFhKbDV3OTZLaVJVRWk4VGvkZz09)

Meeting ID: 919 5276 1718 Passcode: 2121

Last meeting for the year will be on 21 December  
and will recommence on 11 January 2023.

## Synod Insights

Newsletter 2 December

### A Bridge Over Troubled Water

Eugowra is a small country town in NSW. It's a town where  
everyone knows everyone. When tragedy strikes one of its  
residents, it has a ripple effect. When a crisis strikes the  
town, it creates a swell of community spirit.

The town of 750 people was one of many communities in  
the state ravaged by flood waters. In Eugowra, 80 per  
cent of homes and businesses were damaged, and two  
residents lost their lives.

To support the DRCN's efforts, the Synod has relaunched its  
Moderator's Disaster Fund. If you would like to support the  
recovery of communities in disaster-affected areas, details  
are on page 2 of this newsletter.

### Sydney Alliance press Kean on energy costs

About 200 representatives from a wide range of  
organisations met with NSW Treasurer and Energy Minister  
Matt Kean in Parramatta on Wednesday, 30 November.  
The Sydney Alliance members used the meeting to call on  
the NSW government to tackle the soaring cost of energy.  
The Sydney Alliance is a coalition of community  
organisations, unions, religious organisations, and schools.

Read these stories and more in the link below

[Weekly Newsletter \(uca.org.au\)](http://www.uca.org.au)

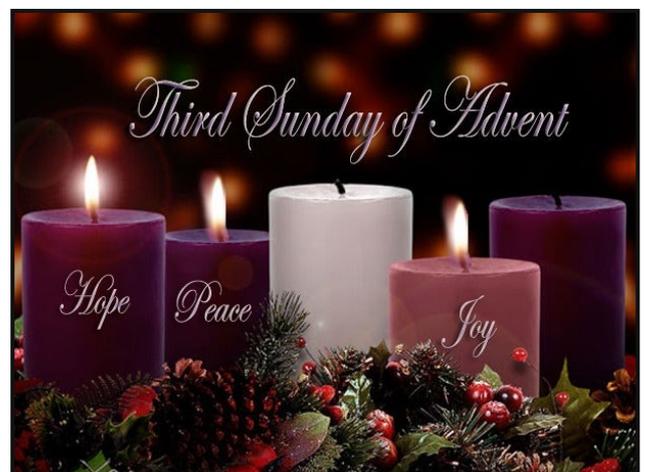
## Zoom prayer group

You are invited to join our weekly prayer time on  
zoom on Thursdays at 4pm. Everyone is welcome  
to join in. For more information contact Lois Rees.

Join Zoom Thursday Prayer Group at 4pm

[https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/98939453219?  
pwd=dG9paSs1eGg4MGZDbGozNWhqOHlIQQT09](https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/98939453219?pwd=dG9paSs1eGg4MGZDbGozNWhqOHlIQQT09)

Meeting ID: 989 3945 3219 Passcode: 2121



## 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.



## Leisure Ministry ~ Coach trip

Bookings now open for a coach trip on **Tuesday 17 January 2023**.

Total cost of \$60 includes comfortable coach travel, morning tea & admission to Alison Homestead Museum and to Central Coast Zoo and Amazement Farm & Fun Park.

Departure time from West Epping  
8:45am.  
BYO Lunch  
Bookings: M & J Ross 9873 3713



## Volunteers

West Epping would not be here if it wasn't for the amazing dedication by numerous volunteers who love and care for our church and its members.

We are going to be taking the opportunity to acknowledge and honour, while also protecting, our many volunteers who give of their time to care for our members and keep our church and its outreach running.

Over the next few months, Jan Lintott, Marie Kilby and Erica Harrison will be contacting our volunteers and giving them information to read and paperwork to sign as part of new requirements by Synod.

We thank you in advance for your support with this process.

## Rosters

Sunday 18 December	9.30am Hybrid service	
Liturgist	Erica Harrison	
Preaching	Rev Samata Elia	
Ministers Assistant	Margaret Leivesley	
Welcomer	Margaret Wilson, Elva Harris	
Stewards	Andrew Aiton, Bruce Elliott	
Reader	Phil Chapple	
Prayers for the people	Helen Campbell	
AV desk	Desy & Phil	
Lectionary Readings Advent 4	Isaiah 7:10-16 Romans 1:1-7	Psalm 80:1-7,17-19 Matthew 1:18-25

## What's on this week

Sunday 11 December	Worship 9.30am Family & Intergen Service & party 5pm
Monday 12 Dec	Inter-church Men's Fellowship 10am
Wednesday 13 Dec	Zoom Mid-week devotion 10am
Thursday 14 Dec	Zoom Prayer group 4pm
Sunday 18 December	Worship 9.30am

### It's just a thought....

....But it could change your life

The fewer the words,  
the better the prayer.

*Martin Luther*

### Supply Minister

Rev David Reichardt 0419 164 329

### Seniors Ministry

Pastor Lyn Graham 0412 990 949

### Office Administrator

Helen Tattersall 0408 972 957

### Safe Church Contact Person

Erica Harrison 0409 044 923

### Church Office

35 Orchard St Epping 2121 p: 9868 3574

Office Hours Thursday & Friday 8.30am to 2.30pm

Email [weppinguca@gmail.com](mailto:weppinguca@gmail.com)

Website [weppinguca.org.au](http://weppinguca.org.au)

Facebook [facebook.com/weppinguniting](https://facebook.com/weppinguniting)

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