



REACHING OUT

Sunday December 24, 2023

9:00 a.m. at Emmanuel Anglican and Uniting Church

Advent 4 Uniting tradition led by Rev Leonie Findlay

7:30 pm Dec 24 Christmas Eve Service at Kergunyah Uniting Church

9:00 am Dec 25 at Emmanuel Anglican and Uniting Church

Christmas Day Anglican Tradition led by Rev Peter McKeague

Bible Readings for Sunday December 24

Advent 4

2 Samuel 7: 1-11,16; Luke 1: 46b-55 or Psalm: 89: 1-4, 19-26; Romans 16: 25-27; Luke 1: 26-38

The Birth of Jesus Foretold



In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, 'Greetings, favoured one! The Lord is with you.' But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.' Mary

said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God.' Then Mary said, 'Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.' Then the angel departed from her.

Luke 1: 26-38

Bible Readings for Sunday December 31

Christmas 1

Isaiah 61: 10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4: 4-7; Luke 2: 22-40

Praying For One Another 2023

In the Uniting Church Presbytery of North East Victoria.

Congregations in the Presbytery are called to pray for one another each time they meet. By naming each other in prayer we enhance our pastoral support with each other, in God's company. This invitation builds our faith linkages every year. This week we pray for the congregations of **Upper Murray – Corryong Alpine & Rural Resource Ministry (ARRM)** commencing Sunday December 24.

MARY'S RESPONSE

Rev Leonie Findlay

PRAYER

Gracious God, for the gift of your Son given to us as a gift of love, we thank and praise you. As Christmas nears, we once again stop to remember how the world anticipated the birth of our Savior. Like that long ago event that people awaited with longing, there are many prayers that we look to you for answers.

Lord, help us to believe that you are at work in our lives and that a new era in our lives will soon begin. Thank you that our hope is based on our confidence that you answer prayer and no matter how long we need to wait, you are faithful.

'For you know the plans you have for us. Plans to give us hope and a future.'

In the name of Christ, we pray.

AMEN

SOME THOUGHTS

When Mary received the angel Gabriel's message that she would conceive a son through the Holy Spirit, she was disturbed. However, despite her fears, uncertainties, and questions, Mary decided to trust God's divine plan for her life. She surrendered to God's will.

In response to Gabriel's message, Mary proclaims, "I am the Lord's servant. May your word to me be fulfilled." (Luke 1:38) Mary's desire to serve God and surrender to His Purpose, was greater than her fears.

We too have real fears in our lives when fulfilling God's purposes. We often have more questions than answers. But we can learn and be inspired by Mary's story. She leaned on God's word and moved forward, trusting God's leading and direction. Mary believed that God would keep His promises.

Being the mother of Jesus was Mary's greatest blessing and ultimate source of suffering.

She witnessed Jesus endure intense ridicule, opposition, and crucifixion. As any mother would, Mary wanted only what was best for her son, but also endured great pain and suffering watching her son suffer. In our times of difficulty God wants us to fully depend and lean on him. Within our own strength, our personal suffering can attempt to consume us, but we must fully rely on the Holy Spirit to guide, carry, and sustain us through times of adversity.

God gave Mary an extraordinary blessing in being the mother of Jesus the Messiah. She was unsure of exactly how He was going to use her. Like Mary, God is calling us to practice trusting Him daily with our lives and His purposes for us. With limited information and control, we must continue to trust God's path and provision.

As we come to the end of a year, may we reflect on Mary's journey. Despite her fears and anxieties, she decided to trust God's word, praise God through suffering, trust God in the unknown, and surrender to God's will. His plans for our lives will take us down winding and uncertain roads.

Often, we will not know the way to go and will see our fears increase. Let us be encouraged by Mary's story and reminded that God will lead, guide, and direct us if we are prepared to surrender to His will for our lives. In times of uncertainty, let us continue to praise God with the intensity of Mary. Let us trust God in the unknown and be assured that God's plans are to prosper and not to harm us. May our desire to serve and accomplish God's purposes be greater than our fears.

SELAH

A BENEDICTION



My soul praises the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my saviour.

Lectionary Comment - Luke 1: 26-38

In vv. 8-17, Luke has told us about Zechariah seeing an angel in the sanctuary of the Temple. The angel told him that his wife, Elizabeth, will bear a son, who will be named John. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit and “turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Elizabeth is now in the “sixth month” (v. 26) of her pregnancy. God sends the angel Gabriel to Nazareth. (Angels have appeared at great moments in the story of salvation. Gabriel also appeared to Daniel in Babylon. In John 1:46, we read “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” It was a town known for its jealous, materially minded people.) It is through Joseph (not Mary) that Jesus is of the lineage of David. Mary’s name in Hebrew is Miryam , meaning exalted one (“favoured one”).

The angel, speaking Aramaic, probably said shalom! Peace be with you! Mary is especially “favoured” (vv. 28, 30) with God’s love, and as such has long been part of God’s plan. “Perplexed” (v. 29), she reflects on this greeting (“pondered”, v. 29), drawing on her faith: in what way am I “favoured”? She might have panicked in the presence of God’s messenger: awe can easily turn into fear. Gabriel now tells her (vv. 30-33): she will bear a son, Son of God, a king. (God says “do not be afraid” to Abraham when he tells him he will have a son.) V. 31a recalls Isaiah 7:14: there Isaiah tells King Ahaz that “the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel” (meaning God with us .) Psalm 89:26-27 also speaks of the link between the dynasty of David and sonship of God. (“The Most High”, vv. 32, 35, is God.) The prophet Micah often speaks of the house of Israel as the “house of Jacob”; in his book (4:7), we read “the Lord will reign over them ... forevermore.” (Jacob is renamed Israel after his struggle with God at Peniel (Genesis 32:28), but we find both names used for the man and the people from that point on.)

While Mary does not doubt Gabriel’s message from God, she does wonder how can this be?. The last clause in v. 34 can be rendered since I have no husband. Mary is engaged to Joseph. Gabriel, in v. 35, answers Mary’s question by telling her that she will conceive through the power of the Holy Spirit (not through sexual union): a gift from God. The child will be filled with the Holy Spirit (“holy”), dedicated to the service of God, and “will be called Son of God” . V. 37 is like Genesis 18:14, where God says “Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?”. There (as with Elizabeth) in advanced years (“in her old age”, v. 36), after a normal gestation period, Sarah gives birth to a son. Jesus’ birth is even more exceptional than those of Isaac and John the Baptist. To be a “servant of the Lord” (v. 38) is special: David, in v. 8 of today’s first reading, is called a servant. Luke is doing more than telling the story of the Annunciation: he is placing Jesus in the context of Old Testament prophecies.

Chris Haslam of the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton

Emmanuel Roster

December 24

Elder on Duty: Ted Stabb
Reader: Ted Stabb
Prayers: LouAnne Stabb
Early Word: Carol Harris

TV Screen: Harold Cover
Usher: Harold Cover
Pianist: LouAnne Stabb

December 25

Elder on Duty: David Robinson
Reader: Karen Robinson
Prayers: Carol Harris
Early Word: LouAnne Stabb

TV Screen: Ted Stabb
Usher: Ted Stabb
Pianist: LouAnne Stabb

December 31

Elder on Duty: Ted Stabb
Reader: Harold Cover
Prayers: David Robinson
Early Word: LouAnne Stabb

TV Screen: Ted Stabb
Usher: Ted Stabb
Pianist: LouAnne Stabb

Coming Events

Wed December 27 8:30 am
10:30 am
Mon January 29 10:30am

Grounds and Maintenance
Morning Tea and Fellowship at Emmanue
Community Shop Reopens

Christmas Flowers

For Christmas it would lovely to have some fresh flowers in the church. If you have garden flowers do bring them along, preferably in a vase, but we have some at church if you don't have one. Don't forget to take them home following the Christmas Day morning worship. Thank you!

A Christmas Message from Rev'ds Christine and Peter

'Another year has almost gone and much has happened in that time to so many of us. Some have faced challenges; some have overcome difficulties; some have had good news to share and some not so good. But in all our ups and downs, in the messiness of life, we again look forward to the Christmas to give us hope for the future. We remember that this earthly life is not the end of the journey and we put our faith in God.

Peter and I have been privileged to minister among you during 2023. Unfortunately, my health has limited my involvement of late, but I remain with you in spirit and love. We wish you all a very special Christmas season blessed with hope, joy, peace, and love. For those who find Christmas difficult, we pray for comfort and strength. Above all, may Christmas be a renewal of faith and give us the courage and grace to walk the way of the Lord in 2024.'

God Bless you all,

Rev'ds Christine and Peter

Community Shop

The Community Shop is closed but that doesn't seem to stop the donations. I will be driving past at least once a day to check for stuff at the door and will remove what I find. If you go past and notice stuff, please give me a call and I'll arrange for it to be taken inside. It's important that we keep the Shop door as free of stuff as possible. Thanks for help with this not so pleasant aspect of our wonderful Community Shop. LouAnne (0419 644 769)

Ministers of the Word & Other Contacts

UCA: Rev. Leonie Findlay

0419 990 358

lfindlay03@bigpond.com

Anglican: Fr Jacques Jefferies

02 6024 2129 or 0434 063 069

stjohnsw@bigpond.net.au

[weekly RDO: Friday]

Emmanuel Pastoral Care:

Speak with an Elder or Warden

Emmanuel Prayer Chain:

Give requests to Betty Saggars on 0427 761 044

Address:

PO Box 435, Wodonga 3689

Office Phone:

Emmanuel Meeting Place: (02) 6059 5460

Reaching Out:

Items to Harold Cover 02 6024 7929 hcover@bigpond.com

or LouAnne Stabb 0419 644 769 stabb@inet.net.au by Wednesday.

Christmas Bowl Appeal



Fourth Sunday of Advent

Showing Love to the most vulnerable

Sisters Srinidhi* and Mahira* are Sri Lankan refugees who have been living in refugee camps in India for decades and aren't able to access medical care outside the camps. OfERR, a refugee-run organisation supported by Act for Peace, has been providing crucial support in the camps for over 40 years. Through the Christmas Bowl you can help send health workers into the camps and provide medical care to those who need it. **Please give today.**

*Names changed for safety reasons

CALL: 1800 025 101 VISIT: christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au

The Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. ABN 86 619 970 188

Thank you for joining once again with churches across Australia as we share God's love through the Christmas Bowl.

More information here: <https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/>

Donate here: <https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/donate>