



REACHING OUT

Sunday December 31, 2023

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

Anglican tradition led by Rev Peter McKeague

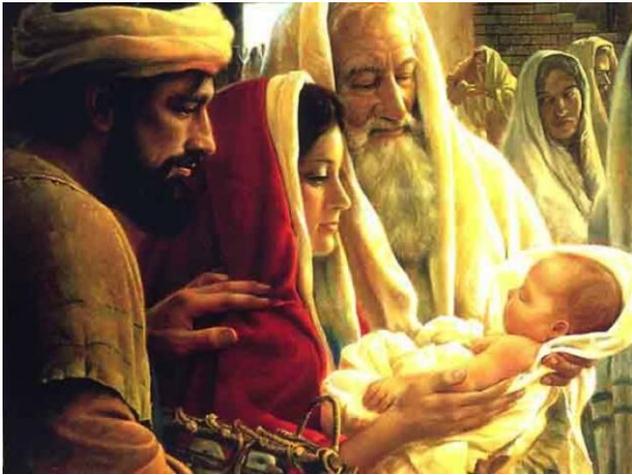
No Service at Kergunyah Uniting Church

Bible Readings for Sunday December 31

Christmas 1

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

Jesus Is Presented in the Temple



When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord'), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, 'a pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.'

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the

Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel.'

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too.'

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband for seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came, and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

The Return to Nazareth

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Luke 2: 22-40

Rev Leonie

It is with concern that I let you know that Leonie has had a serious fall. She fell at home on Tuesday evening, and yesterday evening was transferred to St. Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne for further observation and tests. Ross is with her and would appreciate our prayers. We will keep you informed of how she is.

A prayer vigil will be held at church tomorrow, Dec 29, 9:30 am – 12 noon. Feel free to come anytime within the morning if you are able. God hears all prayer, no matter where one is when praying.

JOGGING IN TRIANGLES

Rev Leonie Findlay

PRAYER

O lord, we take ourselves too seriously. We complain more than we laugh. We think we are mostly responsible for making things happen in our lives, rather than relying on you. Forgive us Lord, for such arrogance and pride. LORD, help us to learn to be less busy. To learn to rest, wait, and abide in you. To relax in you, enjoy you and the life you have given to us. Lord, as we relax and slow down may we see what we have missed in our frenzied activities. As we see you more, may we praise you more.

In the name of Christ, we pray. **AMEN**

SOME THOUGHTS

We In Western society are more accustomed to doing rather than being. Even as Christians we often embrace in practice, a kind of salvation by works, despite what we profess.

We are still firmly trapped by the 'protestant work ethic'. In the words of Psalm 127 we still eat 'The bread of anxious toil,' in our own efforts. However, Jesus invites us to consider the lilies, not just to examine their beauty, but to note how they grow. They grow spontaneously without conscious effort or concern, cared for by the Master and Creator. How far removed is this tranquil scene from the life of many of us. Trying so hard to grow and be productive. Spurring ourselves on to more and more frantic efforts, 'for the Lord.'

Many Christians are great workers for God's cause. Volunteering for difficult jobs, out many nights a week attending church committee meetings. However, when it comes to sitting still for a moment and relaxing in God's presence to receive his directions, empowering and resources we are unable to stop. The hyperactive prophet Elijah, had to go through the valley of depression, anger, physical exhaustion and bitterness before he was prepared to listen to the 'still small voice' of God, for his direction.

"Be still and know..." (Psalm 46: 10). The Hebrew term here is *raph*, which means *relax!* Relax and know that I am God. The challenge facing us is to rediscover that fine balance between action and contemplation, the inward and outward journeys. The reading of scripture suggests that for every challenge to action there is at least one other command to rest, remain and wait or abide. Also, in our busyness we have lost a sense of praise and thanksgiving. We are so busy doing things for God that we do not have time to stop and comprehend what God has done and is willing to do for us. This being the case, we have little that consciously we can praise him for. Life indeed has become far too serious. If what we have, we receive as a gift, and if what we have is to be cared for by God and if what we have is available to others, then we will possess freedom from anxiety.

Slow us down Lord. Break the tension of our nerves and muscles with the soothing music of the singing streams. Slow us down Lord. And inspire us to send our roots deep into the soil of life's enduring values.

That we might grow towards our greater destiny.

Remind us each day that the race is not always to the swift; that there is more to life than increasing its speed.

(Tim Hansel. When I relax I feel guilty)

SELAH

BENEDICTION

'God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.'

AMEN

Lectionary Comment - Luke 1: 26-38

Jesus has been circumcised, marking him as a member of God's chosen people, Israel, through whom world salvation was to be achieved. After childbirth, it was 40 days before a mother could be purified before a priest in the Temple, so it is at least that long since Jesus' birth. She was expected to offer a lamb, along with a turtledove or a pigeon; if she were poor (as Mary is), two turtledoves or pigeons sufficed. Exodus 13:1-2 required that every firstborn boy be consecrated to God. Jesus' presentation in the Temple is like Samuel's. Jesus and his family fulfil the requirements of Mosaic law.

Simeon looks forward to the coming of the Messiah to restore Israel to favour with God ("the consolation of Israel", v. 25). The Spirit has told him that he will see the Christ before he dies (v. 26). Simeon's words in vv. 29-32 are known as the Nunc Dimittis, from the first words in Latin. He begins by saying that God is setting him free, as a slave is granted liberty. He is now free to die (for the Spirit's revelation to him is now fulfilled), and Israel is free of bondage. God has saved Israel, as he promised to "all peoples"; his salvation is for Gentiles too. In v. 33, Joseph is Jesus' legal father. Simeon prophesies in vv. 34-35 through the Spirit (v. 25). Jesus is destined for the death and resurrection ("falling" and "rising") of many; he will meet opposition, and will cause many to think deeply about him. Mary too will need to decide for or against Christ ("own soul", v. 35). Simeon and Anna together stand before God; to Luke, men and women are equal in God's eyes. Anna praises God, and tells many the meaning of Jesus, as Simeon has prophesied. Like Samuel, "the favour of God was upon him" (v. 40).

Chris Haslam of the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton

Bible Readings for Sunday January 7

Christmas 2

Genesis 1: 1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19: 1-7; Mark 1: 4-11

Emmanuel Roster

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

January 7

Elder on Duty: David Robinson

Reader: LouAnne Stabb

Prayers: Karen Robinson

Early Word: Carol Harris

TV Screen: Harold Cover

Usher: Ted Stabb

Pianist: LouAnne Stabb

Coming Events

Wed January 3 8:30 am Grounds and Maintenance
10:30 am Morning Tea and Fellowship at Emmanuel
Mon January 29 10:30am Community Shop Reopens

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@iinet.net.au by Wednesday.

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 **Mathoura** commencing Sunday December 31.

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)



OUR SPIRITUAL BODY

By Bill Pugh

We were having morning tea outside our favourite patisserie.

I couldn't but help to reflect on the lives of passersby.

Young of every age with their whole lives before them, with fit and healthy bodies and many adventures ahead of them.

And the middle-aged, slowing down but getting quality out of life's experiences.

And then there were the elderly, some on sticks, walking slowly, leaning over a bit but determined to carry out their shopping tasks and then go home.

In his 2nd Letter to the Corinthians, Paul calls our bodies an earthly tent which does its job in life but gradually wears out.

This is our human condition.

Reflection:

Read 2nd Corinthians 5:1-10

God has given us these human flesh, bodies for life but not forever.

As our human tent wears out, God gives us a spiritual body which lasts forever.

He who has prepared us for this very thing is He who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Paul concludes thus: *"So we are always confident, even though we know that while we are at home with the body we are away from the Lord-for we walk not by sight but by faith.*

Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So that whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him."