



REACHING OUT

Sunday January 9, 2022

Weekly News for Wodonga West and Rural Uniting Churches

9:00am at Emmanuel Anglican and Uniting Church.

Uniting Tradition, led by Rev Leonie Findlay

11:15am at Kergunyah Uniting Church.

Masks are required inside the building for all persons over aged 8. Many thanks to everyone for following the COVID requirements when attending worship and other activities at Emmanuel. There may well be changes in the near future and we'll continue to do our best to keep us as safe as possible. We still should check in via a QR Code or with the tablet. COVID is well and truly in the community and we must each take care for our own protection but also for that of others. If you do feel unwell, please stay at home, but do keep in touch with us. We must look after each other.

Baptism of Jesus

Readings

Isaiah 43:1-7; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22



As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, John answered all of them by saying, 'I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.'

The Baptism of Jesus

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, '

You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.'

Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

'Without Oughts and Ifs'- A Reflection

Rev Leonie Findlay

PRAYER

Divine Spirit, descend upon us today as you descended upon Jesus on the day of His baptism. In the midst of our brokenness, we long to touch the healing of your Spirit, as you touch us with your love. In the presence of evil around us, we yearn to be protected by the fire of your sustaining Spirit. As we remember, with gratitude, our baptism reminds us that we are blessed people made whole and one through the Spirit made known in Christ Jesus.

AMEN.

SOME THOUGHTS

It is hard to live in the present. The past and the future keep harassing us.

The past with guilt, the future with worries.

So many things have happened in our lives about which we feel uneasy, regretful, angry, confused or at least ambivalent. And all these feelings are often coloured by guilt that says:

'You ought to have done something other than what you did:

You should have said something other than what you said.'

These 'oughts' keep us feeling guilty about the past and prevent us from being fully present to the moment. Worse, however, than our guilt are our worries.

Our worries fill our lives with 'what ifs'. What if I lose my job, or I lose my health?

These 'what ifs' can so fill our minds that we become blind to the beauty around us.

We miss the smiling children in the street, or they make us deaf to the grateful voice of a friend.

These 'oughts and ifs' pull us backwards into the unalterable past and drag us forward into the unpredictable future. In so doing we miss the significance of the present, the here and now.

God is a God of the present. God is always in the moment, be that moment hard or easy, joyful or painful. When Jesus spoke about God, he always spoke about God as being where and when we are.

'When you see me, you see God. When you hear me you hear God.'

God is not someone who was or will be, but the one who is, and who is for me in the present moment.

To know God is to know him in the only time we are given, the present.

Jesus came to help us deal with the burden of the past and the worries we hold for the future.

God is with us right where we are, in the here and now.

SELAH

BLESSING



Father who sees all, help us to see more of you.

Father who knows all, help me to know more of you.

Father who is in all, help me to live more in you.

Go now, and go in peace, and go with your eyes open.

Be not afraid rather abide with the God of the present moment

AMEN

Lectionary Comment - Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

People flock to John the Baptist, responding to his urging to start new, ethical lives – as a way of preparing for Jesus (vv. 3-6). John has condemned those who seek his baptism with no intention of reforming their ways (v. 7). He has warned that being Jewish is no assurance of being part of the renewed Israel. Failure to respond to his call to repentance can lead to condemnation at the end of time.

V. 15a, in the Revised English Bible, says: “The people were all agog, wondering about John ...” People expected a “Messiah”, an agent of God who would restore Israel and the triumph of God’s power and authority. John tells them that “one who is ... coming” (v. 16) is so great that he is unworthy even to “untie ... his sandals”, a task done by slaves. Baptism purifies, removes sin. The agents the “one” will use are vastly superior to the water John uses. Jesus is also more “powerful”, mightier, as leader of the final struggle against evil. (At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit comes with tongues of fire.) V. 17 uses the metaphor of harvesting to tell of Christ’s action as judge at the end of time. The wheat was tossed in the air with a “winnowing fork”: the grain fell to the ground but the chaff was carried by the wind to the edge of the “threshing floor”. God will “gather” the godly but will condemn the ungodly (to burn in hell).

Jesus is baptised (v. 21) to show his solidarity with John’s proclamation of part of God’s plan for saving all who come to him. Jesus begins and ends (22:46) his ministry with a prayer. In vv. 21c-22, God shows himself to believers: an event beyond human language. The Holy Spirit, always with Jesus, is seen descending on Jesus, marking a milestone in Jesus’ career. People really see the event (“in bodily form”). The Holy Spirit seems “like a dove” – a bird symbolizing the hopes of humans for love, life and union with God – hopes now realized in Jesus. The voice calls on Jesus as God’s “Son” and servant (“well pleased”, v. 22). Jesus is God’s “Beloved”, the one whom he chooses as his agent.

Chris Haslam of the Anglican Diocese of Edmonton

Praying For One Another 2021-22

In the Uniting Church Presbytery of North East Victoria.

Many Congregations are in the habit of deliberately praying 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. We invite our congregations to pray whenever they meet for the next group (or groups) of congregations on the list, according to date.

For the Uniting Church in the Presbytery of North East Victoria, this week we pray for the congregations of **Wangaratta, Eldorado, Greta-Moyhu, Whitfield** and the **Uniting** agency, commencing January 9.

Worship resources

Worship Resources - should you not be able to join with others at church for worship.

Click on the link below to find UCA resources for a wide variety of live streamed or recorded worship services.

<https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/weekly-worship/>

Your Weekly Offering



For those that give by way of ‘giving envelopes’ you’ll find that they are almost gone. We will be printing new ones for those who give this way unless we hear from you that you would like to change. If there are others who would like printed envelopes for 2022, please contact David Robinson (0407 835 432) or LouAnne (0419 644 769). If you wish to use direct deposit, account details are: BSB 033-264, account 960276, account name Emmanuel Congregation. Please note ‘offering’ on your deposit. Thank you for maintaining your offering. LouAnne

Emmanuel Roster

January 9

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

TV Screen: Carolyn Renfrey
COVID Marshall/ Usher: Ted Stabb
Organist: LouAnne Stabb
Morning Tea: Carol Clutterbuck/ Shirley Horsfall

January 16

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

TV Screen: Harold Cover
COVID Marshall/ Usher: Ted Stabb
Pianist: Betty Bjorksten
Morning Tea: Carol Clutterbuck/ Shirley Horsfall

Bible Readings for Sunday January 16 Epiphany 2

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; John 2:1-11

Morning Tea Roster

We've been able to have morning tea in a more 'normal' manner these past few weeks. Carol Clutterbuck and Shirley Horsfall have been coming every Sunday to ensure that all is ready for our time of refreshment and conversation. We'd like to have a few more people to give them some help. We'll be making a new roster soon, so it would be great to have some additional people to share the task. Please get in touch with LouAnne (0419 644 769) or Carol C. (02 6024 5896) if you're able to assist perhaps one Sunday a month. Thank you.

Coming Events

Wed. 12 Jan 8:00 am Grounds and Maintenance – summer time recommendation
Mon. 31 Jan 10:30am Community Shop Opens for 2022

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 02 6059 2244 stabb@inet.net.au by Wednesday.
Website: <http://www.emmanuel.unitingchurch.org.au/index/htm>

Emmanuel Church Life

During January we will feature some articles about the various activities that are undertaken by church folk to sustain the life and work of Emmanuel.

Grounds and Maintenance

This week we thank our dedicated our grounds and maintenance team who meet each week on Wednesday morning. In 2008 Eric Halden (former congregation member) and Harold Cover initiated a major project with Hume Employment Services to provide employment opportunities for job seekers in the community. Through the project a large amount of work was carried out over 6 months to develop the grounds. Tasks carried out included:

- Installation of an irrigation system around the church grounds
- Layout of garden beds, tree planting and concrete edging
- A concrete path around the inside of the playground area and installation of a sandpit
- The initial construction of vegetable planter boxes
- A brick barbecue structure
- Original pathway to the shed.

In addition to supervising the community workers a budget with Hume Employment Services provided new gardening equipment, including leaf blower, whipper snipper, additional lawn mower, garden tools and replacement ride-on-mower.

In later years Birallee Park Neighbourhood funded expansion of vegetable garden beds, new concrete pathways, installation of 2 large water tanks, electrical connections to pump equipment, lighting, and irrigation system. BPHN managed the vegetable garden for a number of years for their *From our Garden to Your Table* cooking program. Due to changes in the use of the grounds, the church now has full responsibility for vegetable growing management under the leadership of Don La Fontaine.



Prayer of the Week

World Council of Churches

Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine



A woman in the Egyptian village of Sakra.

Photo: Paul Jeffrey, 2012.

We pray for:

- ending the violence racking this region, that the people might live together in peace, security and respect for each other
 - those who have grown weary and disillusioned in searching for solutions
- an end to religious differences being exploited to perpetuate conflict and further displacement of people
- political leaders who will courageously bring about justice and reconciliation for the sake of all.



THE SEAL OF CERTAINTY

By Bill Pugh

Since COVID-19 we have been confronted with a deadly disease. Medical science has developed wonderful vaccines to protect us, but there is still uncertainty. Will variations not be covered?

Uncertainty is a very human attitude. How will we cope if something unexpected happens?

In his Letter to the Corinthians, Paul lists many experiences which tested his faith.

Imprisonment, beatings, storms at sea, threats to his life, and abuse, were all encountered.

Reflection:

The seal of certainty for Paul was his meeting with the risen Lord on the Damascus Road. Nothing could destroy the reality of that experience, although he was sorely tested many times.

Yet he stood firm. To the Romans, he wrote this:

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, no power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

(Rom 8:38-39)

www.victas.uca.org.au/resources | Photo from freepik.com | January 2022

Bequest

Remember the Church in your will.

A bequest will help continue to work of the Church long after you're gone. There are many ways a bequest can help the work of the Church - whether for a specific cause that's dear to your heart, for a specific congregation or for the general purposes of the life of the Church.

Want to know more?

Speak to your solicitor or financial advisor, or visit the Synod's website:
www.victas.uca.org.au