



REACHING OUT

Sunday December 15, 2024

9:00 am at Emmanuel Anglican and Uniting Church

Anglican tradition led by Rev Peter McKeague

No service at Kergunyah Uniting Church

Bible Readings for Sunday December 15

Advent 3

Zephaniah 3: 14-20; Isaiah 12: 2-6; Philippians 4: 4-7; Luke 3: 7-18

John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our ancestor"; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the axe is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.'

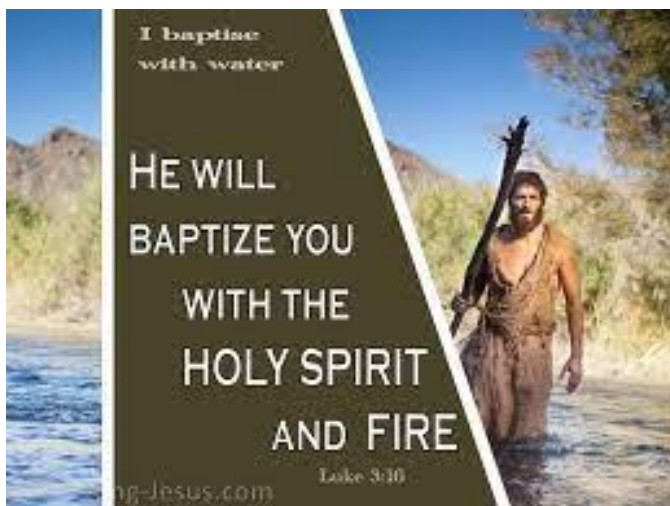
And the crowds asked him, 'What then should we do?' In reply he said to them, 'Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.' Even tax-collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, 'Teacher, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.' Soldiers also asked him, 'And we, what should we do?' He said to them, 'Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.'

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.'

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people

Luke 3: 7-18



Bible Readings for Sunday December 22

Advent 4

Micah 5: 2-5a; Luke 1: 46b-55 or Psalm 80: 1-7; Hebrews 10: 5-10; Luke 1: 39-45, (46-55)

Praying For One Another 2024

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 congregation of **Trinity North Albury** Sunday December 15.

JESUS PRINCE OF PEACE

Rev Leonie Findlay

PRAYER

Christ Jesus, our Lord, even though we believe in God, and we believe also in you, yet our hearts are often troubled.

We pray for peace in the world and yet there are wars and rumours of wars.

Lord, we are surrounded by those in need of your intervention.

The cancer patient facing pain and death.

The businessman with crippling debts,

The social worker swamped with concerns.

The unemployed youth.

May our hearts never accept a superficial peace that exults in our own peace with God. while other hearts are troubled.

In the name of Christ, we pray.

AMEN

SOME THOUGHTS

It is incredible that a man called Jesus who lived in Israel 2,000 years ago has had such immense and continuing influence. Very few people who have lived on this earth over centuries are known by name. A few gain momentary notoriety and disappear.

But the words and deeds, in fact the person of Jesus Christ, straddle 2,000 years of human history like a mighty colossus. It is this solitary figure who has revised our thinking about good and evil, life and death, war and peace.

The word peace is closely identified with the expected Messiah in the Old Testament, especially in the writings of the prophet Isaiah. The Hebrew word 'shalom - Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6)-has been enshrined in our terminology by the composer Handel and his usage of the phrase in his memorable chorus from the oratorio, the Messiah.

The early Christian church declared Jesus to be the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies about the one who would come and reign in peace.

There is a peace which the world can give. But this peace is only temporary.

A freedom from distraction, anxiety and strife, the source of ongoing distress and inner turmoil, can temporally be achieved using stimulants and other addictive measures. These enable some to experience a fleeting peace, enough to live their lives in their own way with relatively little interference. There is also the peace of momentary flight from the unpleasant things of life through daydreams, pleasure and amusement, the peace of escapism. And there is the peace of false security when people cry, 'peace, peace', and there is none.

Personal and social peace is a rare treasure in our contemporary world. Peace is perhaps the most elusive quality in Advent as we scurry to buy, wrap, mail, bake, party, decorate and celebrate the season. 'Wait on the Lord,' is a common spiritual injunction, but it is perhaps the hardest for our Western psyche. Could it be that our cries for 'peace, peace' when there is no peace are related to our need to be in control and to be in charge?

What if peace is that elusive spiritual gift that only has a chance to be given by God when we relinquish control and are in a simple reflective mode?

It is frightening to truly 'let go and let God'. But if the hands of our spiritual life are clenched in dread or control we cannot open them to receive peace.

SELAH



BENEDICTION

Christ is our peace. We meet in his name and share his peace.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. And always with you.

AMEN

Emmanuel Roster

December 15

Elder on Duty: Ted Stabb
Reader: Jenny Mathieson
Prayers: LouAnne Stabb
Early Word: LouAnne

TV Screen: Harold Cover
Usher: Rod Clutterbuck
Organist: LouAnne Stabb

December 22

Elder on Duty: Carol Harris
Reader: Necia Searle
Prayers: Rod Clutterbuck
Early Word: Carol Clutterbuck

TV Screen: Harold Cover
Usher: Rod Clutterbuck
Organist: TBA

Christmas Services at Emmaneu

Sunday, December 22
Tuesday, December 24

9:00 am Advent 4 worship, UCA tradition led by Rev. Leonie Findlay
There will be no service at Emmanuel on Christmas Eve.
Next week details of services at St. John's, St. Stephen's and Kergunyah will be in Reaching Out.

Wednesday, December 25
Sunday, December 29

9:00 am Christmas Day worship, UCA tradition led by Rev. Rhonda Kissick
9:00 am 5th Sunday worship, details soon, but no Congregation meeting

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.

Christmas Bowl Appeal 2024

[The Christmas Bowl](#) started on Sunday 24 November, with The Reign of Christ Sunday, and runs for six services through to Christmas Day. Act for Peace is the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. We work with and for people around the world who are uprooted by conflict and disasters. We invest in local organisations and work together to create lasting change, helping empower people to regain the peace that comes with having a safe place to belong. Australian churches, through the Christmas Bowl, have acted together to bring peace and hope into the world for 75 years. Help us continue to act for peace.

Your impact: Supporting families who are internally displaced in Gaza



Rima, a mother of six, has been living in Jordan for 20 years after fleeing Gaza in 2004. Three of her children are disabled, and Rima struggled with isolation and the burden of raising her family. But everything changed when she joined the Forsa project.

How to Donate

- Giving envelopes – available at church
- Open plate collection – please place in envelope and mark donation for the Christmas Bowl Appeal
- Online transfer – Transfer the money online to our account: **Account Name:** Act for

Peace Ltd BSB: 012 332 **Account Number:** 2323 75215 Please include the reference number: **CB(A-157104)** as the message in the transaction and email us at info@actforpeace.org.au to notify us of your deposit so that we can attribute it to you

Coming Events

Wed December 18 8:30 am
10:30 am

Grounds and Maintenance
Morning Tea and Fellowship
Craft group resumes in February

Sun February 23, 10:15am

Annual General Meeting of the Congregation after Worship

Presbytery of North East Victoria Chairperson's letter of Encouragement, December 2024

Hello friends,

This past week I was in Melbourne and I saw the windows at Myers. There was one window with a rather static nativity and no waiting. The rest of the windows were about merchandising and so far as I could see, because there were queues, it was merchandising that had nothing to do with Christmas. Before last week I would have said that the celebration of the birth of Jesus had been hijacked to gift giving and family get-togethers. There is nothing wrong with either of these two things by the way, but this week, I would say it has gone a step further and that Christmas has mostly become merchandising without the need for Christ at all.

At various forums of the church I have been speaking, without much impact, on the need for us to do some theology, some talking about God, that makes sense for people here and now. I am not sure that what I am going to say would make sense for anyone outside the church, but I do think we need to know what we stand for with more surety.

Christmas is fast approaching and as part of reclaiming the day I have been thinking about incarnation which means God taking on flesh or more literally, God in the flesh. For we, who belong to Christ, Christmas is about more than family and gift giving, as lovely as these things are. It is about more than the birth of a particular child. It is that God has come to us and is active in the world. This is Christmas for us and it is a marvel - an act of grace.

Some folk define grace as God's undeserved favour towards us, as something that cannot be earned and while there is truth in this, undeserved favour to me somehow lacks the tenderness or the connectedness we might expect, or desire in relationships, even those with God. Another way of describing grace is in the Hebrew concept of hesed, a word which simply means loving kindness. It is a word that is used to describe relationships between people, but it is also used in scripture to describe the attitude of God towards humanity - loving and kind. I don't think the two terms are mutually exclusive. Undeserved favour helps us understand that our relationship with God is not one of equals, and loving kindness helps us to understand the movement of God toward us. It is particularly relevant in God's movement toward us in the Christmas story.

I was with my daughter recently and we were talking about the things that seem to us to be missing from our culture with the demise of organisations like the church, a sense of community and a concern for others before ourselves to name two. There is value in who we are and what we do, the thing will be, the thing is, for us to discover new ways to speak about the mystery at the heart of our faith. Mystery may indeed be the key word. The one thing that lingers after most of Christianity is gone from our culture, is the sense somewhere that we are spiritual beings and that there just may be something beyond ourselves. It is a feint whisper, but it is I think, our point of entry. The great mystery of God, however we describe God, the force for life and liveliness, beyond us, that comes to us and awakens us to our true selves. This is not to say that there is not a great deal more about the practice of the Christian faith, than this, but it is a beginning place.

Because of this I want to invite you, as never before, to explore that sense of awe and wonder that lingers in the story of the birth of Jesus. This year, let it be more angels singing and the heavens alight with the glory of God than ever before, as together we serve the one whose taking on flesh, whose coming in flesh, is life to us. A blessed God filled Christmas celebration to each and every one of you,

Gereldine