



CONTACT



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

18 February 2024

From Rev Tom

Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. ² Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.' But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' (2 Kings 2: 1-2). Last Sunday was Transfiguration Sunday. It is the prelude to Lent. It provides context and encouragement as we travel on the downward journey with Jesus as he is confronted by the increasing rejection of humanity. That downward journey invites us to realise our individual human frailty as well as the invitation to live our journey in the same manner as Jesus. On Sunday one of the readings is from 2 Kings and is the story of the ascension of Elijah into heaven. A feature of that story is the singlemindedness of Elisha to receive double the share of the spirit present in Elijah. This whole passage seems much less like history and more like the author communicating spiritual insights true for us all. One of those insights or truths is the challenge to Elisha that if he wants double the spirit of Elijah he must see Elijah being taken up to heaven. Elisha determines that nothing else matters to him, nothing will deter him. Elisha is single-minded in his pursuit. It is worth noting that one of the titles of Jesus in the early church was *lhidaya*, meaning "single one" or "unified one". It seems one of the things highlighted in the Elijah/Elisha story is that if we want to realise real spiritual awakening then we have to be single-minded about it. In fact, we must become simply single-minded. Now often it is described as a negative, being single-minded, but in this context, it is the opposite of being scattered. Most of us are scattered, taken by whatever arises and takes our interest. It is one of the reasons the vast majority of us give up on New Year's resolutions. We have forgotten them by the next day. Lent is another opportunity to work on this single-mindedness. We can choose something that we will remove from our life for the period of Lent. Often it is a particular food or drink. A purpose of this discipline is to develop our will, and keep us awake. Remember Paul says pray without ceasing. This is not about saying specific prayers. It is about being awake to our purpose and meaning in life, who we are and whose we are. If I commit to stop for a period some habit from my life then I have to "wake up" to achieve my goal. Being awake means remembering the reason for going against my habit. I am doing it to be awake to, and guided by, the Spirit that is within me. Even if I fail to stick to my commitment the fact that I have committed reminds me of two things. Firstly, I am confronted by how weak I am in my commitments, and secondly, when I remember I have failed I still also remember the reason for the commitment, to be awake to the Spirit in me. This Lent I have decided to withdraw from social media. I can't do that entirely because some of my work involves using social media. But that then makes my commitment even more difficult. Also, I am committing to limit reading the news. That will be even harder because I almost feel an obligation to read the news. However, the battle that this determination creates in me is something even more valuable than the news itself. It builds in me a singlemindedness to the purpose of being a disciple of Jesus and remembering the Spirit in me more throughout my day.

DIARY

Wednesday 14 February

- 10.00am Ladies Fellowship at Charlestown Church
4.30pm Ash Wednesday gathering at Garden Suburb

Thursday 15 February

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community - common seated area opposite Butcher at
Charlestown Square
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb Church

Saturday 17 February

- 8.00am Men's Breakfast at Charlestown

Sunday 18 February – Lent 1

- 9.00am Holy Communion Service Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom
Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15

Monday 19 February

- 10.00am Garden Suburb Nursing Home Pastoral Care Visitation
1.30pm SFED on Zoom
7.30-9.00pm Following Mark and looking for Jesus (see notice in Contact)

Tuesday 20 February

- 9.00am Needlework n Natter
10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

Thursday 22 February

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community - common seated area opposite Butcher at
Charlestown Square
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb Church

Sunday 25 February – Lent 2

- 9.00am Worship Service Leader: Kerrie Dixon Preacher: D Yardy
Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38 or Mark 9:2-9

Monday 26 February

- 1.30pm SFED on Zoom
7.30-9.00pm Following Mark and looking for Jesus (see notice in Contact)

Tuesday 27 February

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square
12.00pm Garden Suburb Ladies Fellowship

Thursday 29 February

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community - common seated area opposite Butcher at
Charlestown Square
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb Church

Friday 1 March

- 10.00am World Day of Prayer at Charlestown Uniting Church

Sunday 3 March – Lent 3

- 9.00am Worship Service Leader: Anne Threlfo Preacher: Rev'd Tom
Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

Monday 4 March

- 10.00am Garden Suburb Nursing Home Pastoral Care Visitation
1.30pm SFED on Zoom

THE PRAYER PAGE



Please join with each other as a congregation, to commit to praying at meal times, for the needs mentioned below.

Pastoral Prayer Points

- * Those in our Congregation who have lost loved ones in recent months
- * Tony
- * Graeme continuing recovery
- * Jean
- * Fred Bryant home from hospital
- * June Locker
- * Ryan Walpole in rehabilitation
- * Kathryn Gray
- * Jacqueline Fenwick
- * Peter Ferguson
- * Nola in hospital
- * Isabella
- * Ashley has a broken nose after a fall
- * Janice Wright
- * Eileen Dunn
- * Mert
- * Judith and family
- * Lorraine Pepper
- * Enid Power
- * Max

Maintained by SFED and Enid Power

Congregational Prayer Points

- World Day of Prayer on March 1st at 10am – our Church hosting it
- SFED
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- those affected by climate change in Australia eg floods, droughts and fires
- Tom and NEOS as he follows ideas and opportunities including with Wesley Mission at Windale, Hunter Community Alliance, Greater Charlestown Sustainability Group
- Hunter Community Alliance's arrangements towards the Founding Assembly in April 2024 , as approaches are made to encourage politicians to attend and give support to local initiatives to reduce emissions
- The situation in Israel and Gaza
- The situation in Ukraine and other trouble spots
- Thanksgiving for all orphanage children at school thanks to generous donations
- Rohingya people in Bangladesh where 7000 people homeless



Lent Looms Large on the Landscape

...as Ash Wednesday is just around the corner... now has **Landed**

So, the Season of Lent begins with our usual service Ash Wednesday service including the Imposition of Ashes (optional) 4.30pm at Garden Suburb Uniting Church and continues for forty days and nights (not Sundays) until Easter morning, the day we celebrate the triumphal resurrection of Jesus from the dead...the Queen of the Churches' Festivals!

A quick perusal of our Bibles tells us that in Matthew chapter 4; Mark chapter 1 and Luke chapter 4, that **immediately** after Jesus' Baptism, and **before** His Ministry on earth, He went out into the wilderness for forty days and forty nights while He fasted, prayed and was tempted by the Devil before His Ministry began. This was to make very clear to Him just what is was that God would have Him do.

OK, got that, so what's this 'gig' of Lent mean for me?!

It is a special time that Mother Church has set aside where we are able (if we so chose) to draw nearer to God. To get our relationship better with Him; to discover just what God would have us do during the rest of the year; to correct any relationship problems we have had with other brothers and sisters of Jesus. This we do by extra studying of the Bible; extra times at prayer; making time for silence to enable us, like Jesus, to hear God speak to us, in our reading and our prayer. This, then, will equip us to be better Disciples of The Christ, Jesus!

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Congregation will help us by...

...making our worship together a tad more meaningful (hopefully!) by;

Having a brief Meditation as the service commences (in lieu of the Call to Worship)

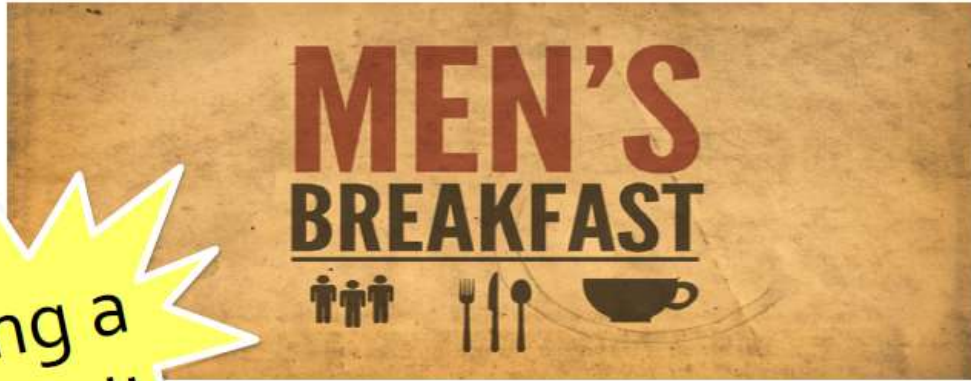
Replacing the pew N.I.V. Bibles (which were withdrawn when Covid was rampant)

You will be able to, therefore, follow the readings in the Bible (if you chose to do so) to allow God to enlighten you through a word, or sentence, as you reflect on what has been read during the brief silence that will follow the readings and the Message. There will not be any music, to help you to concentrate in that moment.

Of course, feel free to bring your own Bible to worship along with three 'markers' to place in the Bible before the service commences. (Strips of paper, small garden storks, straw, anything that is handy!)

If you don't want to fully participate...

...in this Lenten 'gig', that's sad, but OK. Allow it to become just your normal Sunday worship and who knows what may happen on the way so long as we leave ourselves open to the Holy Spirit...always! If you need any further help, please talk with the Rev'd Tom, or your Elder. Your life may depend on it!!!



Bring a Friend!

With Guest Speaker

John Lewis

Missional Communities Leader

Community Changing Communities

Charlestown Uniting Church - 24 Milson Street
8am 17th February
Cost \$12 RSVP to Paul Russell
0411 236047 pmraus74@gmail.com By 14th February 2024

Come and hear Wesley Mission's John Lewis talk about their new initiative - Missional Communities.

In Newcastle and the Hunter this has meant working within community housing projects in Windale and Hamilton South and alongside the community services team in Newcastle West. They work to build communities promoting well being and resilience whilst giving people appropriate and relevant ways to explore faith.

John has previously remotely supported projects like this in countries around the world. Having lived and worked in Newcastle for 20 years John is enjoying seeing how communities in his own town are experiencing the transformative power of community development to change lives.



World Day of Prayer

Friday 1 March

10am

Charlestown Uniting Church

This year's prayer focuses on Palestine. The program was written by a group of ecumenical Christian Palestinian women in response to the passage from Ephesians 4:1-7.

The artwork by Halima Aziz represents three Palestinian women praying together in nature in a peaceful place.

Weekly Bible Study

Rev. Elizabeth Raine and Rev. Dr John Squires are leading a weekly online Bible Study through Lent, open to all. The studies will explore lectionary readings for the coming Sunday.



Rev. Dr Squires said the studies were pitched at lay people who are active in their church.

“People who lead worship and preach on a regular basis have told us that they particularly appreciate the studies,” he said.

“We have lots of people participating who don't do that on a regular basis but who value the opportunity to explore their faith and strengthen their discipleship. And we have had some ministers and pastors join in for their continuing education.”

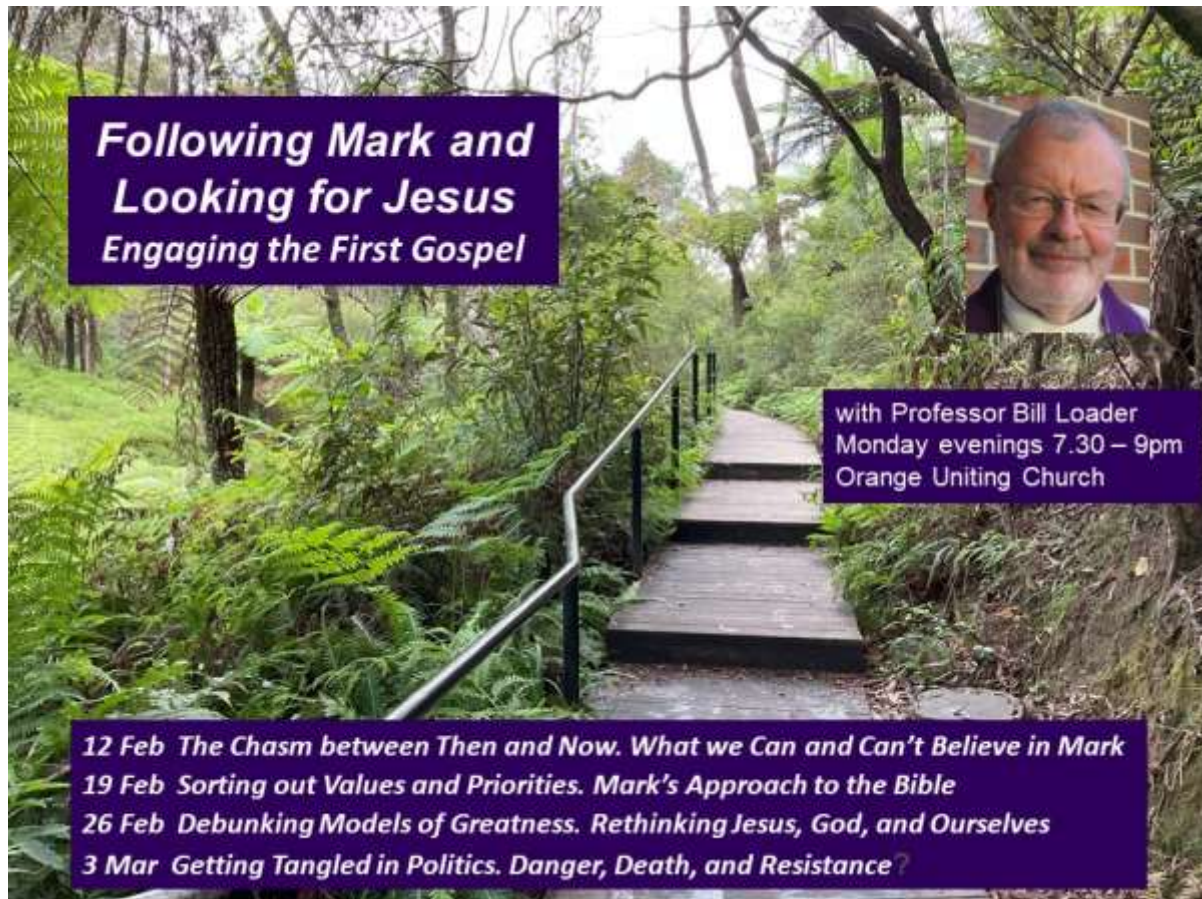
“Over the four years we have been offering these studies, we have had people from early adult years all the way through to those who have spent a lifetime of service in the church—it's a wonderful mix of experience and perspectives.”

Each session runs for 90 minutes. Participants will receive a resource in advance, with the discussion questions that we will explore in the session. The same session is offered twice each week, at 10am on Thursday and again at 7pm on Thursday.

The study will not run on Maundy Thursday.

Tuggeranong Uniting Church is hosting the studies online through their Zoom link, and With Love to the World is sponsoring these studies.

For more information and for the Zoom link, contact, email johntsquires@bigpond.com.



**Following Mark and
Looking for Jesus
Engaging the First Gospel**



with Professor Bill Loader
Monday evenings 7.30 – 9pm
Orange Uniting Church

- 12 Feb The Chasm between Then and Now. What we Can and Can't Believe in Mark*
- 19 Feb Sorting out Values and Priorities. Mark's Approach to the Bible*
- 26 Feb Debunking Models of Greatness. Rethinking Jesus, God, and Ourselves*
- 3 Mar Getting Tangled in Politics. Danger, Death, and Resistance?*

Bill's interactive presentation using PowerPoint will be looking at Mark in its day and what it can say to us today. Mark, who expected Jesus to return within a generation, has also given us timeless gems of wisdom. Come and see!

Online: <https://youtube.com/@orangeunitingchurch?si=JzW-xjimpUeWID34n>

Some of our Church Contacts:

Minister

Rev Tom Stuart
M: 0427 625 502
E: tom@thestuarts.id.au

Children & Families Resource Worker:

Mrs Cathy Beeton
M: 0409 445 933
E: Cath4858@gmail.com
Mrs Cathy Beeton is also our Safe Church Contact Person

Bank Account Details for the Charlestown Garden Suburb Multi-Centre Congregation:

Bank Account held with: Uniting Financial Services
Account Name: Charlestown Congregation General Account
BSB: 634 634 Account No.: 100030837

For Offering please put Ref: Offering

Administration:

P: 4943 4019
E: office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au
24 Milson Street, Charlestown NSW 2290
PO Box 449, Charlestown NSW 2290

Keep up to date with happenings and info:

Webpage: <http://www.chagsuca.org.au>
Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/CharlestownUnitingChurch>
Project Reconnect: <http://www.projectreconnect.com.au>
Worship Services: <https://tinyurl.com/CHaGS-YouTube-Link>