



CONTACT



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

11 February 2024

From Rev Tom

The Spiritual Formation and Education Team (SFED) met for the first time in 2024 and discussed some of the issues that we would like to address next in leading the Charlestown and Garden Suburb Congregation. One of the issues raised was how we might best express our Christian aims in the various activities that are taking place across the congregation. These days a number of those activities include significant social interaction. Examples of this are the Friendship Circle, the morning teas at Charlestown Square and Lake Macquarie Square, the Men's Breakfast, and the Girls' Night Out. There is also the cuppa that follows worship. There are various reasons why each of these groups were started but a part of all of them is social interaction, the development of a sense of community, and one-on-one connection. It was expressed that it would be great if we all had some sense of intentionality in those groups. That is, to create an opportunity for people to express more deeply those things that are creating "energy" in their lives at the time. Being heard by someone else has great healing potential. It increases intimacy, and it increases a sense of connection. Such a connection can reduce tension and anxiety. In specifically Christian terms, it increases a sense of something deeper, a sense of the presence of God, even when God is not named. All this can happen simply by the practice of good listening. There are some simple things to keep in mind with good listening. One of them is that another person usually doesn't tell you about something so you can fix it. Even when people seem like they are seeking advice, they usually really just want to communicate the struggle that they are experiencing and the pain it is causing them. They tell you things because of the emotional catharsis, the release, that the telling provides. As soon as they start hearing advice all the benefit of having had their story heard gets undone. Another thing about good listening is when a person finishes what they are saying the listener responds by repeating back to the person something they just heard like, "Oh, so you went via the Newell Hwy when you travelled to Queensland!" It is even better if you reflect back the emotional content. So, "... and you loved the different scenery of the western route!" Another thing about good listening is to keep our own talking to a minimum and turn whatever we say back toward what the other person had just said so, "Yes, my wife and I travelled the Newell Hwy back in 2022, my favourite part was stopping at the Hot Springs at Moree. What stood out for you in your journey?" If you are game it is possible to turn almost any conversation into something deeper, like "We stayed at Coonabarabran, and I went for a walk after dark. The stars were so bright! It was, well, you know, felt like a bit of God moment actually. I'm not the only one who has that happen am I?" In all of this typically we are not providing advice, we are not trying to demonstrate we know something, and we are always remembering that our speaking is in service to our listening, not the other way around. I noticed in a table conversation with an Aboriginal fellow when I was in Darwin, that there was always a long space of silence before he would say anything. I read later that in traditional Aboriginal culture, it was practised that in a conversation the person listening would wait till after the other person had finished what they had to say before thinking about what to say in reply. I realised that in our culture we all too often use the time the other person is talking to think of what we are going to say next. This is not communication. It is talking at each other.

Continues over.....

Leaving a gap after a person has finished speaking (rather than interrupting them before they have finished speaking) will often mean they will begin saying more, and often that “more” ends up being the most important part, the bit of deeper self-revelation. The benefit of that self-revelation is not so we think we are clever that we got them to say that, but rather it is a moment where that other person has just experienced a greater sense of intimacy. This is the gift Jesus brought people, like the woman at the well, and it is the gift we can give in our ordinary conversations. And of course, when that conversation is done we continue to honour that person in their absence by not repeating what was said in that conversation to someone else as a means to get ourselves some kudos. That gives us a clue about good listening. We always have to deal with our egos. Most of what we say wouldn't get said if we had better control over our egos. That is the other aspect of being a Christian ... humility ... and it is essential to good listening.

DIARY

Thursday 8 February

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

Friday 9 February

- 6.00pm Ladies Night at Kahibah

Saturday 10 February

- 10.00 Friendship Circle to meet at Belmont 16Footers

Sunday 11 February – Epiphany 6

- 9.00am Worship Service Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom
2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6 2; Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9
2.00pm 2024 SRE Dedication Service at The Willows, Warners Bay Uniting Church

Monday 12 February

- 1.30pm SFED on Zoom

Tuesday 13 February

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

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

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

- * Vivianne Butchers and family as they mourn the death of her mother
- * Tony's recovery after a fall
- * Graeme at home and organising rehabilitation
- * Jean recovering from Pneumonia
- * Fred Bryant home from hospital
- * June Locker
- * Ryan Walpole in rehabilitation
- * Kathryn Gray
- * Those in our Congregation who have lost loved ones in recent months
- * Mac has now no trace of cancer following extended treatment
- * Jean Cowley
- * 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
- Church Council
- 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
- Fabian and Wilfreda now able to send children to school but schooling is very expensive





Notes from Church Council Chairperson

The Church Council met this week with a full agenda, and I'm back in the Chair after a time of leave. The meeting began with worship time considering a passage from Hebrews 12, particularly verse 29: "God is a consuming fire." We often think of God coming to us as a gentle quiet voice, but God can also come in a blaze, with strength, which may bring us discomfort and shake us up. In this lies an invitation to move towards love, which "burns like a blazing fire, like a mighty flame." (Song of Songs 8:6).

Matters discussed at the meeting included:

- SFED has provided ideas about how we might offer a deeper connection to people we meet in our mission activities, at the Men's Breakfast, and the community morning teas, for example. Ideas included providing a leaflet of upcoming events and highlighting the role of congregation members in listening to others and moving to a deeper level of conversation. There was agreement on the importance of forming relationships with others as we share God's love.
- A letter has been sent to several neighbouring Uniting Church congregations to initiate regional missional conversations.
- Cathy will attend a Presbytery Consultation with Children and Families on 11 February.
- Anne and Tom will attend a Presbytery Consultation on Education on 23 February, that will address effective ways of providing support to lay leaders.
- The Mission plan of the congregation is to be updated. Contact Rev Tom Stuart, Anne Threlfo or Sue Warren if you wish to provide input.
- Tom's Vital Ministry Consultation is due. The Presbytery team will be led by Rev Dr Rod Pattenden, and the CHaGS team will be Warren Dixon, Sue Pepper, Julie Fenwick and Anne Threlfo.
- A service of closure for the Whitebridge Wellness Centre will be held later in the year.
- The finance team reported that Family Worker pledge income is down and that our cash in the bank (less long service leave) is down \$14,500 from 12 months ago.
- A small team from the Church Council will meet to appraise and recommend future directions for the Children and Family Worker ministry. The team is Cathy Beeton, Sue Pepper, Kerrie Dixon, and Lesley Clulow. **The team will welcome other members of the congregation, and/or any ideas you may have.**
- Matters are proceeding in the sale of the Whitebridge property. We are required to form a Sales Proceeds Assessment team with representatives of our congregation, Presbytery, and Synod. The CHaGS representatives will be Kerrie Dixon, Lorraine Pepper, and Paul Russell.
- Presbytery has asked the Church Council if we would be interested in pursuing a conversation with "Reach Church", (an affiliate of Australian Christian Churches, formerly known as Assemblies of God), who are interested in leasing the Garden Suburb property. The Church Council has agreed to engage in a conversation to gather further information.
- Tom and Kathy have advised the Council that they will be vacating the Manse in January 2025 to live in their own home. The Church Council will be exploring options for future use of the Manse.
- Jenny will be taking some leave, so the office will be closed on 13 and 20 March.
- The Church Council encourages members of the congregations and their families to attend the Founding Assembly of the Hunter Community Alliance at 6pm on Wednesday 10 April at the Great Hall of the University. We are investigating the hiring of a small bus to make it easier for everyone to attend.
- CHaGS will be hosting the World Day of Prayer at 10am on Friday 1 March at Charlestown Church.

Please hold these matters in your prayers, particularly the teams who will be busy in coming weeks. Please contact myself, or any member of the Church Council if you have any questions, or would like to provide comments or suggestions.

Anne Threlfo

Ph: 0439 754 376

Email: annethrelfo@gmail.com

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.



**Ash
Wednesday**

You are invited to a gathering of prayer,
reflection, and renewal beginning your
Lenten journey to Easter
Garden Suburb Uniting Church
Marshall St
4:30pm 14 February 2024

Children & Family Worker Update



Over the past 5 years or so we have been providing Stationary Packs for children at Wiripaang School, I would like to carry on this mission work and over the next couple of weeks I will be collecting donations towards these packs, if you would like to donate towards a stationary pack please see me, if you are not in church & still wish to donate please call me on 0409445933 or see your elder.

I am still waiting for definite numbers for these packs it is usually between 20 & 30 & each pack will cost between \$10.00 & \$15.00 depending on the age group.

This Sunday is the SRE Dedication Service 2pm at The Willows if you are able to attend it would be much appreciated by myself & the local SRE teachers.

Have a good week. Blessings Cathy

SRE

With Love to the World

books for Lent/Easter are available to pick up in the Church foyer, for those that receive a copy.





Charlestown Ladies Fellowship

Wednesday 14th February

Will be held at Charlestown Church
from 10.00am

Join in fellowship

ALL WELCOME



Charlestown Friendship Circle

Saturday 10 February

Meeting at the Belmont 16Footers café for
fellowship and to discuss the plan for the year.

All Welcome



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 To Explore Lenten Texts

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.

COMMUNICATION

How do you and others hear about what’s happening in our congregation, or the Uniting Church Hunter Presbytery or the wider church?

- Weekly in “Contact”
- Announcement slides during worship
- From the CHaGS website
- On the CHaGS Facebook page, or other Facebook pages
- In the Presbytery Enews



Of course, information is only accurate if we communicate what’s happening and what’s changed. As I’ve been “out of the loop” for a while, I’m checking in to make sure I’m up to date.

Group coordinators, if you would like your group’s event or meeting advertised in Contact, or announced on a slide during Sunday worship, please let Anne Threlfo know.

Group coordinators, if the information or contact details about your group are not up to date on the website, please let Anne know.

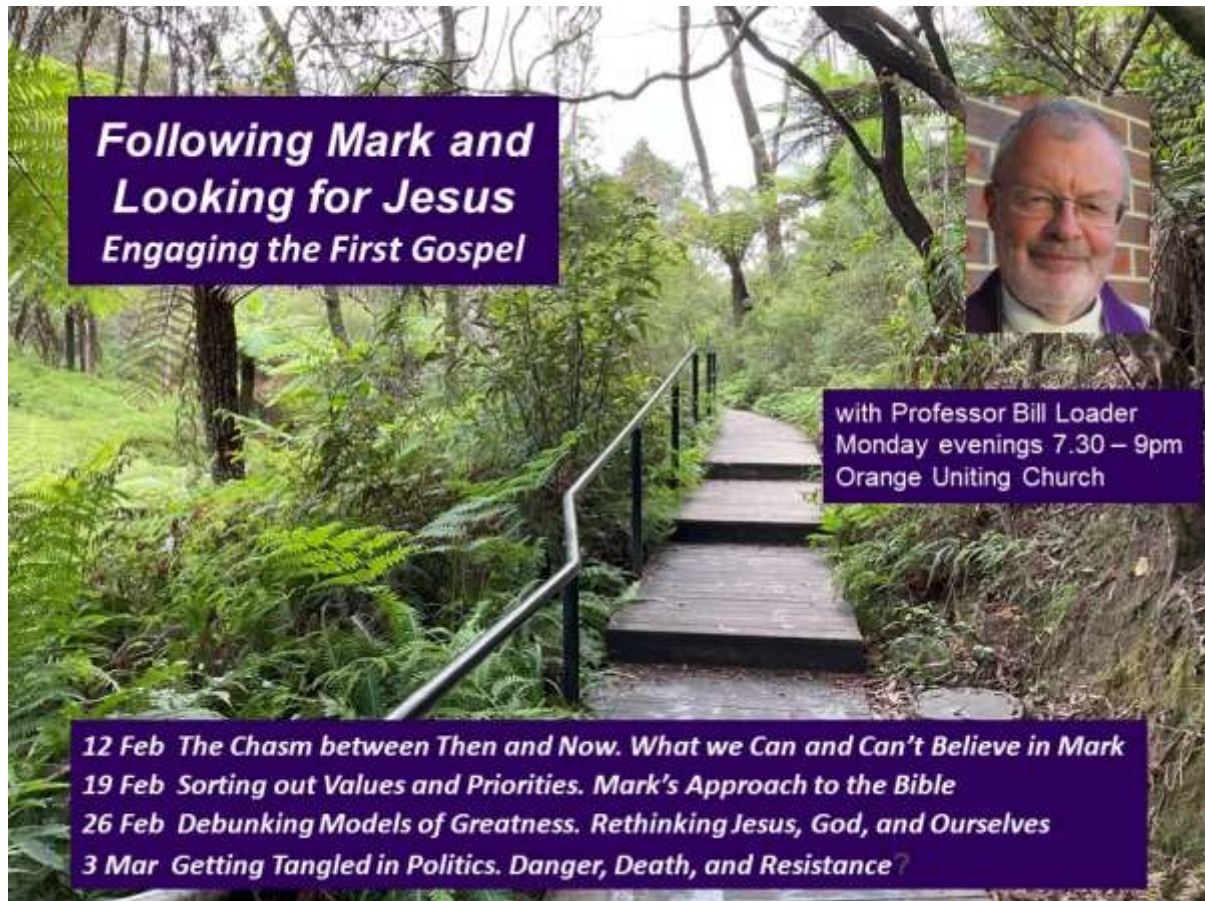
Group coordinators, if you would like your event advertised further afield, on Facebook or in Enews, please let Anne know.

If you have other ideas about letting each other and the community know what’s happening, please let Anne know!

Anne is looking forward to hearing from you!

Ph: 0439 754 376 Email: annethrelfo@gmail.com





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>

ANGEL FOOD

Take a cup of kindness,
Mix it well with love,
Add a lot of patience and
Faith in God above,
Sprinkle very generously with
Joy and Thanks and Cheer,
And you'll have lots of
Angel Food, to Feast on
All the year.

Author, Unknown.

Sisters of Faith Dinner

The Diocesan Ecumenical and Interfaith Council invite you to join us for our Sisters of Faith Dinner to celebrate *International Women's Day*, the theme of which is "Inspire Inclusion".

As sisters of faith we inspire others to value women's inclusion, by doing so we collectively forge a more inclusive world for women.

Tuesday 5 March 2024
6:30pm - 9pm
Victor Peters Suite
841 Hunter St, Newcastle West
Cost: \$20*
RSVP by: 27th February



Guest Speaker:
Rabbi Jackie Ninio

**Dinner cost helps to support CatholicCare's Social Enterprise Program.*

Registrations at: <https://sistersoffaith2024.eventbrite.com.au>

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
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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