



CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

11 December 2022



From Rev Tom

There will be a Blue Christmas service as part of our Advent 4 service, the last Sunday before Christmas. The reasons we are doing so is because there are so many of us who are going into this Christmas without loved ones, quite a few for the first time. There are also many who are going into Christmas with a very different state of health than in previous years. In some case this year people go into Christmas where their spouse is a very different person, particularly because of dementia. I am personally experiencing something particular in all this and wondering if anyone else is noticing it. I can't quite articulate the dynamics that are at work, but I know how it affects me. I meet with people, perhaps who have just experienced the death of a loved one, or someone has had a diagnosis that is either life changing or terminal, or they are about to have a major operation, or just had one. In each of these circumstances I notice something different in the relationship. Perhaps I could try describing it like the Celtic Thin Place. The Celts describe certain times in the year, and certain geographical localities, as places where the barriers between God and us are very thin. These places have a certain clarity, and sacredness, a holiness, touched with a "more than" feel. Well, this is what I experience when I am meeting people these days. There is sadness in the conversations. There is sometimes anxiety, or at least uncertainty. There can be a sense of being overwhelmed. There is often wondering about the future. Or there is simply a grief in the present. Sometimes there is quite a bit of pressure, medical appointments, adjustments to homes, arrangements with support networks, or the health sector. Sometimes it even means moving from one abode to another. Sometimes it is ever present physical pain. Or simply being laid up in a hospital. All the same, in so many contexts, I discover there is a something that holds all that aside, even as it is present, where there is this thin place where I experience a real connection in my meeting the other person. It somehow shows me that there really are different levels in our lives. We can be going through chaos in our lives, and it seems perhaps, even because of the chaos, we have access to this higher level, that is untouched by chaos and calamity, where there is an even greater quality of our unity with one another. Perhaps it is the unity in Christ that Jesus and Paul tell us about, I am tangibly experiencing it, even if partially and momentarily, in this life. It is felt like an intimacy. It is like a feeling of knowing and being fully known. The barriers that I didn't know were there before are now gone. There is a heightened quality of being, and being together. I have to say that being in the Nyngan flood in 1990 counts as probably my toughest year in ministry (and my first year in ministry). But this past year is right up there for being a tough year. And that follows on from years of Covid-19. Of course, for it to be a tough year for me means it is even tougher for so many in this congregation. I hope and pray that in the midst of all the turbulence of life we all watch for, and experience, this quality that is all about us. Perhaps it is the kingdom of heaven that Jesus says is "at hand"! May we also keep praying for one another that as we each experience our time of need, that we will fall into that love and mercy of God, and discover a love that includes, and is bigger than, all that each of us are going through, and so much more. It seems somehow all ways are the pathway to God's love.

AT MY LOWEST: GOD
IS MY HOPE
AT MY DARKEST: GOD
IS MY LIGHT
AT MY WEAKEST: GOD
IS MY STRENGTH
AT MY SADDEST: GOD
IS MY COMFORTER

DIARY

Thursday 8 December

- 10.00 am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square
11.00am Worship at Garden Suburb Aged Care
1.30pm

Saturday 10 December

- 8.00am Men's Breakfast at Charlestown
6.00pm Charlestown Friendship Circle Christmas Party
at Robyn and Geoff's



Sunday 11 December – Advent 3

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader & Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart
Isaiah 35:1-10, Psalm 146:5-10, James 5:7-10, Matthew 11:2-11

Tuesday 13 December

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Frankie & Co Café at Lake Macquarie

Wednesday 14 December

- 10.00am Charlestown Ladies Fellowship meet at Poppies Café for Christmas Gathering

Thursday 8 December

- 10.00 am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square

Sunday 18 December – Advent 4

- 9.00am Holy Communion and **Blue Christmas** Service – Leader & Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart

Isaiah 7:10-16, Psalm 80:1-7,17-19, Romans 1:1-7, Matthew 1:18-25

Tuesday 20 December

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Frankie & Co Café at Lake Macquarie

Thursday 22 December

- 10.00 am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square

Saturday 24 December – Christmas Eve

- 6.30pm Christmas Eve service at Garden Suburb Uniting Church

Sunday 25 December – Christmas Day

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader – Margaret White
& Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart

Isiah 9: 2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2: 11-14, Luke 2: 1-16

Tuesday 27 December

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Frankie & Co
Café at Lake Macquarie

Thursday 29 December

- 10.00 am Morning tea in the Community – Smelly Cheesecake Café at Charlestown Square

Sunday 1st January – Holy Name of Jesus

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader and Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart

Numbers 6: 22-27, Psalm 8, Galatians 4: 4-7, Luke 2: 17-21



Christmas bowl envelopes are available on the table at the church.

If you don't attend church in person but would still like to donate you could give online or we can put an envelope in with your mailout. Please phone the office on 4943 4019



THE PRAYER PAGE

And so I urge you: carry on an ongoing conversation with God about the daily stuff of life, a little like Tevye in Fiddler on the Roof. For now, do not worry about 'proper' praying, just talk to God."

Richard J. Foster



Pastoral Prayer Points

- * Elaine Ross
- * Lorraine Pepper
- * Donna and family
- * Sue and Warren
- * Mac and family
- * Cat and Ezra
- * Family of Jean Townsend
- * Marion Box
- * Susan Asplund
- * Enid Gaynor
- * Anne Hall
- * Family of John Trenholm
- * Jenny's husband Paul
- * Nita
- * Gloria and John Booth
- * Vivianne
- * Lillian
- * Tony and Nan
- * Mert and Pam
- * Judith and family
- * Ashley and Lorraine
- * Ken and Sharon MacDonald
- * Wilma Birch
- * Enid Power
- * Fred Bryant
- * Max

Congregational Prayer Points

- Preparation for Neos
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Lease of Whitebridge property
- Tom and Kathy
- Cathy Beeton
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- Flood Victims
- Pray for situations in China, Taiwan and North Korea
- Those experiencing drought in the Continent of South Africa
- Wilfreda's orphanage
- Those with financial difficulties in current conditions

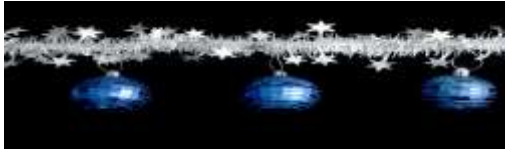


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Advent and Christmas Services



- Our 9am Sunday morning worship will continue at Charlestown throughout Advent, and will be livestreamed and recorded.
- The Sunday morning worship on 18 December will include Blue Christmas, as we remember those who are no longer with us.
- A Christmas Eve service will take place at Garden Suburb Uniting Church at 6.30pm.
- There will be a Christmas Day service at 9am at Charlestown, which will livestreamed and recorded.



Christmas Gathering

All Welcome



Charlestown Ladies Fellowship

Wednesday 14th December

Meeting at Poppies Café in Oakdale Road at
10.00am

Please let Sue Warren know if you are coming on
0427 737 793
so that a table can be set aside



Christmas Party



Will be held at Robyn and Geoff
Greaves house on
Saturday 10th December at
6.00pm

All Welcome



Please bring a plate of food and
let Robyn and Geoff know that
you will be attending

Notes from Church Council Chairperson



This is a copy of an original piece of Aboriginal art and all rights belong to the artist, Robyn Davis, Wadi Wadi Nations.

This art work was the focus for our worship at this week's Church Council meeting. The artist Aunty Robyn Davis invites us to joy and the great promises of God in this Nativity scene in the midst of colour and the promise of grace, understanding, peace, and a future filled with hope.

We read from Luke 1 of Mary visiting Elizabeth, as we acknowledged the importance of community and connectedness. The aboriginal understanding of the individual is in relation to the family, the community, the tribe, the land and the spiritual beings of the dreaming.

How can Advent offer you opportunities to celebrate community and connectedness?

Matters discussed at the meeting included:

- The Neos Support groups will meet for the first time in the second week of January.
- There has been some interest from potential leasees of the Whitebridge property.
- The SRE Dedication service will take place at Charlestown at 2.30pm on Sunday 12 February 2023.
- The Grandparents, Carers and Kids group has finished up. Cathy and Laraine will keep in touch with the couple of families who were attending. The Council thanked Cathy for her work during the year.
- Anne provided a report from Presbytery. The Merewether congregation will be dissolved on 31 December 2022 with a service of celebration and closure taking place on 18 December. The formal meeting was followed by a Mission planning session facilitated by Rev Dr Cameron Eccleston from Uniting Mission and Education.
- The congregation has received a \$10,000 grant from Presbytery to conduct a property study on the Charlestown and Garden Suburb properties. The purpose of the study is to provide information on the possible uses and income earning potential of both properties in order to make a decision about how we can allocate our resources to support our Mission. We have begun a conversation with Uniting Property and with a Property Advisor about the scope and cost of the study which may take place in January.
- One of the cornerstones of the Neos mission is creating space for Tom to spend time in the community, developing relationships and discovering where God is already at work. This means that there will be some things that Tom has been doing which will be done by others. For example:
 - Tom will not preach or write a Contact message on the fourth Sunday of the month. The worship team are working on a number of options for worship on these Sundays, and Anne will write a Contact message.
 - The link for the YouTube livestream of Sunday worship will eventually be sent from the office on a Wednesday.
 - We will continue to monitor the frequency of our meetings.
 - Other changes will gradually happen as "Neos" develops.
- **The wearing of face masks will not be made mandatory, but the Church Council strongly recommends the wearing of face masks during worship, particularly when singing.**

An Advent blessing to all:

Be people of hope.

Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ with all you meet.

Share hope by noticing someone else's humanity.

Share hope by listening to someone's story.

Share hope by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share hope.

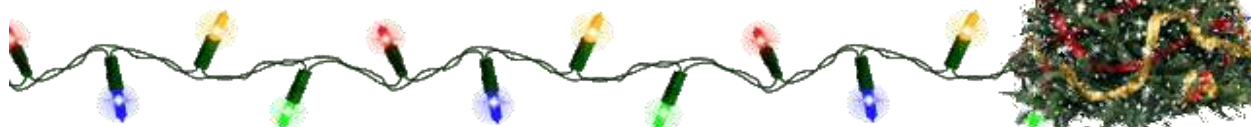
As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share hope with those you meet. Amen.

Anne Threlfo

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

Holiday Arrangements for “Contact” and Mail Outs

- The final Contact for 2022 will be for Sunday 25 December. **Please send notices to the office by 9.30am on Wednesday 21 December.**
- The final mail out of DVDs, booklets and Contact will be on 21 December. You won't miss out on any weeks, but will receive them later than usual.
- The Church Office will be closed on 28 December and 4 January.
- There will be a Contact for Sunday 15 January (if necessary) Please send notices to the office by 9.30am on Wednesday 11 January.
- There will be a mail out on Wednesday 11 January.
- The office will be closed on 18 January.
- Emailing of the weekly booklet will continue.
- Normal Office hours, Contact and mail outs will resume on 25 January.



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting Church

Blue Christmas

Sunday 18 December 2022

9am - as part of usual Sunday worship

Charlestown Uniting Church
24 Milson Street

Remembering those who are no longer with us

Please invite anyone who has suffered a loss

Working Bee



At Whitebridge

8.30am

Wednesday 14 December

For general tidy up and preparing saleable items

Please bring gloves



Morning Tea in the Community

Tuesdays @ 10am
Frankie & Co Café
at Lake Macquarie Fair

Thursdays @ 10am
Smelly Cheesecake Café
at Charlestown Square



Morning teas will continue throughout the holiday period

All welcome!

Enquires to Sue Warren

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

Administration:

P: 4943 4019

E: office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au

24 Milson Street, Charlestown NSW 2290

PO Box 449, Charlestown NSW 2290

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

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>