



CONTACT



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

20 September 2026

From Rev Tom

It seemed like a reasonable plan. Mum was not in great shape after her hip operation, and so Long Service Leave was simply going to involve me doing a bit of house maintenance, followed by Kathy and me taking a trip to Parkes to spend some time sitting at Mum's side and giving her some company. Kathy had wonderfully organised a trip to Uluru at the very end of my leave, just to make sure we felt like we had actually had a holiday.

That is a good plan, isn't it? What could go wrong?

I got to the morning of day two of Long Service Leave - and a beautiful morning it was - but before long I found myself having to be satisfied with the view of a hospital ceiling for quite a few days.

I discovered the frailty of plans. Indeed, you can make them!

Six weeks later I am back at work. On my first day back I realised that, in many ways, we are pretty much where things were when I left for Long Service Leave. It only needs one word: **uncertainty**.

I am due to retire at the beginning of next year. I think that is about the only thing that is reasonably certain. All the rest is up for grabs. My own recent history tells me that I had a really good plan for Long Service Leave, and even that meant very little when confronted by what actually happened. So, at one and the same time, I feel admiration for our leadership - and I feel sorry for them!

We have sold two properties. There is also an aspiration for the existing minister's residence to be replaced with a new one. I cannot begin to convey the complexity involved in accessing the proceeds from the sale of property, or the legal rigmarole involved in bringing a new minister's residence into being.

There are questions such as: How much money will we actually be able to access? When will we get access to it? What plan for the use of the sale proceeds is likely to receive the wider church's approval? What chance do we have of finding the people we are seeking to share in carrying out our plans?

And, of course, there is the deeper question: **What is it that God wants us to do?**

There aren't clear answers to any of those questions. And anyone who claims certainty about what God wants us to do risks confusing their own convictions with the will of God, however sincere and well-intentioned they may be.

Continued over.....

All the same, plans must be made - and plans are being made - even while so many questions remain unanswered. And given that even my relatively simple plans for Long Service Leave were so easily turned on their head, so too can the best-laid plans of this congregation.

So I invite us all to trust in the ultimate goodwill of the God who holds us even when our plans unravel; to be grateful for the abundance that gives us the opportunity to dream; and to commend our leadership for what has, up to now, been a pretty thankless task of leaning into constant uncertainty: endless meetings and submissions, financial analysis, and learning about the differences between employing an ordained minister, a lay pastor, a lay person - and the list goes on.

I don't like the uncertainty. I don't like looking into a future where so little resembles what we have known in the past. I don't like feeling inadequate for the task.

But there is something about being with others in the struggle: experiencing the diverse gifts people bring, feeling the support of the congregation, and trusting that God embraces us in our efforts - even when we cannot be sure where those efforts will lead.

I am reminded of one of my favourite prayers, written by Thomas Merton and published in his book *Thoughts in Solitude* in 1958:

My Lord God,
I have no idea where I am going.
I do not see the road ahead of me.
I cannot know for certain where it will end.
Nor do I really know myself,
and the fact that I think I am following your will
does not mean that I am actually doing so.
But I believe that the desire to please you
does in fact please you.
And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.
I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.
And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road,
though I may know nothing about it.
Therefore will I trust you always though
I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.
I will not fear, for you are ever with me,
and you will never leave me to face my perils alone.



DIARY

Sunday 20 September – Pentecost 17

- 9.00am The Divine Worship
Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom Stuart
Exodus 16:2-15; Jonah 3:10-4:11; Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45, Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matthew 20:1-16
- 2.00pm **Sing for Unity at Glenrock Anglican Parish – see further in Contact for more details**

Tuesday 22 September

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

Thursday 24 September

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square
- 1.30-2.30pm Bible Study in the Dudley Room at Milson St Hub

Sunday 27 September – Pentecost 18 – Migrant and Refugee Sunday

- 9.00am The Divine Worship
Leader: Sue Warren and Preacher: Laraine Chegwiddden
Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16; Philippians 2:1-13; Matthew 21:23-32

Tuesday 29 September

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

Thursday 1 October

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square

Sunday 4 October – Pentecost 19

- 9.00am The Divine Worship
Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom Stuart
Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20, Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 19, Psalm 80:7-15; Philippians 3:4b-14; Matthew 21:33-46
- 10.45-11.30am **A month of Prayer for the Way Ahead** at the Milson St Hub – **more details to come.**

Monday 5 October

- 10.00am **Pastoral Care Visit at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility**

Tuesday 6 October

- 10.00am **Pastoral Care Visit at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility**
- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

Thursday 8 October

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area at Charlestown Square

Friday 9 October

- 6.00pm **Ladies Night at Kahibah**

Saturday 10 October

- 8.00am **Men's Breakfast at the Milson Street Hub** – The Nigerian Church, Persecuted Yet Vibrant – Why? See further in Contact for more information.

Sunday 11 October – Pentecost 20

- 9.00am The Divine Worship
Leader and Preacher: Grahame Pricter
Exodus 32:1-14; Psalm 106:1-6, 19-23; Philippians 4:1-9; Matthew 22:1-14
- 10.45-11.30am **A month of Prayer for the Way Ahead** at the Milson St Hub – **more details to come.**

THE PRAYER PAGE



Prayer is the Voice of Faith

Pastoral Prayer Points

- * Gloria
- * Anne Hall
- * Jean Witherspoon
- * Pray for Janice Wright and family
- * Robyn Greaves and family
- * Marion Box
- * Prayers for Grahame Beeton and family
- * Mert and Pam
- * Jacqueline Fenwick
- * Rene Kelly
- * Glen and Marion
- * Valmai
- * Kelly
- * Tony Sellen
- * Vicki
- * Pam and Ken
- * Lyn Benson
- * Jean
- * Isabella
- * Eileen Dunn
- * Max
- * Don Humphries

Maintained by SFED

Congregational Prayer Points

- Month of October, Prayer for the Way Ahead 10:45 am each Sunday
- NREMA application
- Major upgrades to the Project Reconnect website
- Worship Services
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Church profile and preparations for Tom's retirement
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- Northern Presbytery, Millers Forest, Morisset and Muswellbrook congregations
- Northern Presbytery Retreat this week- Paul attending
- pray for Catherine Pepper who has recently been appointed Associate General Secretary, Strategy and Governance for the Assembly of the UCA. Pray that she may receive wisdom and grace as she fulfills her role which is involved with preparing the church for the future in the areas of strategy and governance.
- Margaret Jurd College and Darren Twist the Principal
- Orphanage in Kenya and Wilfreda
- Neos ministry
- Those affected by climate change in Australia eg floods, droughts and fires
- Prayer for those in conflict zones in the world

To ensure the Congregation is kept informed, following on from the reporting of the case of abuse at Garden Suburb Nursing Home, these things have taken place:-

- **Kathy and Tom have visited.**
- **A letter was received from Uniting's Head of Mission and Social Impact, David Barrow, who worshipped with us some weeks ago:**



4 September 2026

Dear Uniting Church community,

I am writing to you with information regarding a former employee at our Uniting Garden Suburb residential aged care service, who was sentenced yesterday for a number of offences at the service.

You may already be aware of this matter as concerns about this former employee were first brought to our attention in February 2025, by other employees.

The allegations were immediately reported to NSW Police and the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission and there was media coverage at the time. The employee was removed from the service and their employment terminated following investigation.

Media coverage of yesterday's sentencing has included deeply distressing details about the offences.

Our thoughts are with the residents and their loved ones who were directly impacted and for everyone in the Garden Suburb community. We are providing every support possible to all our residents and employees at the service, including free counselling and support from our Chaplains and Pastoral Practitioners.

Uniting wants to acknowledge the courage of the employees who came forward to report concerns and assist with the investigation. Speaking up can be difficult and we are so grateful for their actions. Their dedication to our residents and willingness to come forward helped ensure the matter was thoroughly investigated and ultimately brought before the courts.

Uniting continues to pursue a banning order through the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission to prevent the former employee from working in any aged care service in the future. The Commission's determination remains pending.

Since the allegations were first brought to our attention, we have been committed to transparency and have provided our Garden Suburb with as much information as possible, while respecting the privacy of the residents who were involved.

The safety, dignity and wellbeing of every person in our care is Uniting's highest priority. We remain constantly vigilant and are committed to maintaining strong safeguards, responding decisively to any concerns, and continually strengthening the systems and practices that protect our residents, clients and employees.

If you have any questions or concerns you would like to discuss, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me at:
dbarrow@Uniting.org

David Barrow
Director of Mission and Social Impact
Uniting NSW.ACT

Head Office
ABN 78722 539 923
Level 10/222 Pitt Street
Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box A2178
Sydney South NSW 1235
T 1800 864 846
E ask@uniting.org

- The following letter has been sent on the Congregation's behalf:



THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA THE HUNTER PRESBYTERY - N.S.W. SYNOD

**Charlestown and Garden Suburb Multi Centre
Congregation (of the Uniting Church in Australia)**

ABN 83 543 065 394

12 September, 2026

The Manager, Uniting Garden Suburb

Dear Lyndell

This letter is sent on behalf of the Congregation of Charlestown and Garden Suburb Uniting Church.

Along with the flowers sent, we offer our words of encouragement to all the staff at the Garden Suburb Nursing Home. We are also mindful of all the residents, and the wonderful care they receive.

The Charlestown and Garden Congregation share a long history with the Garden Suburb Nursing Home and are grateful for the great care that is given in our community through your facility over the decades. We are conscious of the constancy of the care and the demands involved, both by the needs of residents, but also often limited resources from which to draw. Despite the constraints, we have seen staff continue to give of themselves with grace, professionalism, and care.

No doubt it was an enormous hurt to everyone to discover someone causing harm, betraying trust, and undermining that which is so wonderful about the age care ministry expressed at the Garden Suburb Nursing Home. We pray for all involved, particularly those who endured the abuse.

We wish to express our concern, sorrow, and support for you at this time, and desire to be a continuing support in the future as best we are able.

We hope and pray that staff and leadership will be renewed in strength today and everyday in your ongoing service.

Yours faithfully

Julie Fenwick

Secretary, Charlestown Garden Suburb Uniting Church Council

Church Office: PO Box 449, Charlestown NSW 2290

Email: office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au

UME (Synod) Visit

Thank you everyone for your prayers over the visit from Cameron Eccleston and Linda Barclay from Synod UME on Tuesday.

- They liked our congregation's commitment to mission.
- They liked the location of our church and the opportunities that come from two schools close by and a park across the road.
- They gave us some ideas on adjusting our NREMA (the mission funding application) so we are not so specific and we might have more leeway in filling the positions.

The Church Council will keep you informed.

Church Council Elections

Several of our councillors are coming to the end of their term – Lesley Clulow (Treasurer), Kerrie Dixon, Lorraine Pepper and Margaret White.

We have vacancies in the areas of SFED, Passionate Worship, Risk Taking Mission and Service, Radical Hospitality, Church Council Chair and Treasurer.

Please prayerfully consider if you could serve in this way, or if there is someone in the Congregation you would like to encourage to be nominated for these roles.

A member of Church Council will be able to provide a form if you would like to nominate someone and they agree to be nominated.

The election will take place after worship on 18th October.



SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF THE WEEK

Detachment: means replacing the attachment to (1) idolatrous relationships and (2) self-serving goals and agendas for success, money, power, ego, productivity and image with wholehearted attachment to and trust in God alone.

Practice: Take an attachment inventory. Write a list of the defence mechanisms you are attached to (sarcasm, temper tantrums, aloofness, clowning around). • Ask God to make you aware of the times you instinctively move into your defensive response. Consider what seems to trigger your response. • What response would you like to cultivate instead? • Share your observations with a trusted friend, asking them to pray with you. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you change your attachment to these behavioural patterns.

These resources come from Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us (Transforming Resources). InterVarsity Press

WANT TO SAVE ON ELECTRICITY BILLS?



This Inspiring Australian initiative is supported by the Australian Government

- Kids, come & ride our bike that generates enough electricity to turn lights on!
- Switch from Gas to Electric and save \$2400-\$4000 p.a.
- Learn a bit about rebates, batteries & solar



The Greater
Charlestown
Sustainable
Neighbourhood
Group



THURS. 24/9
3-4:30PM

ALEC ROBERTS
Chairman of CLEANaS



24 Milson St.

Charlestown

Bring the kids!
Afternoon Tea provided



Text to
book your spot:
0493 094 231

CHARLESTOWN & GARDEN SUBURB UNITING CHURCH

A Month of **PRAYER** *for* **THE WAY AHEAD**

A PLACE OF ENCOUNTER.
A PEOPLE OF FAITH.



DATE:

SUNDAYS IN OCTOBER



TIME:

10.45AM - 11.30AM



VENUE:

**Milson St Hub
24 Milson St, Charlestown**

MORE INFORMATION TO COME

All are welcome!

The Nigerian Church, Persecuted Yet Vibrant - Why?

Michael Nwanguma, was born and raised in Nigeria before migrating to Australia in 2012. A Christian, he has lived in several regions of Nigeria, gaining firsthand experience of the country's diverse cultures and Christian traditions.

Michael will explore the remarkable growth of Christianity in Nigeria over the past 200 years, how resilient faith continues to shape Nigeria and influence communities around the world.



Men's Breakfast **Sat. 10th Oct. 8am**

24 Milson St.
Charlestown



Milson Street Hub

\$12 RSVP by Wed. 7th Oct:
Paul Russell
pmraus74@gmail.com
0411 236 047

*Please advise of any
special dietary
requirements

Glenrock Anglican Parish 36 Hexham St, Kahibah



2PM SUNDAY 20.9.26



Come along to this FREE concert and afternoon tea and hear the 'Sing Australia Belmont Choir' raise their voices and join this "worldwide musical movement for unity, peace and community" on the UN International Day of Peace.

Pride Faith Service

6pm, Sunday 25th October

A celebration and nourishment for one and all.



All sexual and gender identifications
and expressions - allies too.

All faith and spirituality expressions
- we really mean it: **ALL WELCOME!!!**

@ Adamstown Uniting Church

www.adamstownuca.org.au



ADAMSTOWN
UNITING CHURCH

MEDITATION/REFLECTION/SHARING

JOHN MAIN 1926-2026

Father John Main inspired the global community of meditation.

John Main wrote **"The task of meditation is to bring all this mobile and distracted mind to stillness and concentration, to bring it, that is, into its proper service."**

Saturday, October 24th 9.30am to 12.30

Location: DoMN LIBRARY

(Corner Tudor and Parry St, Hamilton. **Parking behind Library off Tudor St and Sacred Heart Cathedral Car Park**)

DONATION: \$5.00

Morning Tea Provided at 9.30

RSVP by October 21st

annecuskelly@hotmail.com or 0407436808

A promotional poster for a scam prevention session. On the left, a white cloud contains the text 'Staying safe from scams' in large red letters, with a blue hand icon to the right. Below this, it says 'A FREE practical session presented for older people by the Council on the Ageing New South Wales. Proudly supported by ANZ.' On the right, there is a large red-outlined warning triangle with a black exclamation mark. In the top right corner is the ANZ logo. At the bottom right, a black-bordered box contains the text 'Protect yourself' in red, followed by the event details: 'Tuesday 6 October 2026 11:00am - 12:00pm Community Hall The Place Charlestown Frederick Street Charlestown NSW 2290'.

Scams are becoming increasingly sophisticated, and older people are often targeted. Knowing what to look for — and what to do — can make a real difference.

Join Council on the Ageing New South Wales for a free community session in Charlestown on *Staying Safe from Scams*, where we'll share practical tips to help older people recognise scams, protect their information and know where to seek help. Stay and have a cuppa and chat as well.

Event Details:

- Date: Tuesday, 6 October 2026 📅
- Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM (with light refreshments afterwards) ⌚
- Location: Community Hall, The Place: Charlestown Community Centre, Frederick St, Charlestown NSW 2290 📍
- Free event 🆓

Some of our Church Contacts:

Minister

Rev Tom Stuart

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

Administration:

P: 4943 4019 E: office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au

24 Milson St, Charlestown NSW 2290

PO Box 449, Charlestown NSW 2290

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

Communications Coordinator:

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>

Worship Services: <https://tinyurl.com/CHaGS-YouTube-Link>