



CONTACT



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

8 March 2026

From Rev Tom

The Gospel reading for this coming Sunday, as we enter the third week of Lent, is John 4:5–42. Interestingly, it is the first of three consecutive Sundays that feature the longest Gospel readings in the entire three-year lectionary cycle. (Lent 4 and Lent 5 contain even longer passages!) These extended readings invite us to slow down and dwell deeply in the story.

This week we encounter Jesus in conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well. As I read the passage, I was struck again by how Jesus, a Jew, deliberately crosses powerful religious and cultural boundaries simply to speak with a Samaritan. The hostility between Jews and Samaritans was long-standing and deeply entrenched. Yet Jesus steps directly into that divide.

As I reflected on this story, I also found myself thinking about the terrible events unfolding in Iran. Once again, the world is thrust into war. I read that the estimated cost of just the first week of this conflict could be around \$2 billion (US). Such vast resources are poured into death, destruction, and chaos - money that could instead have been used to improve life and relieve suffering.

In 1953, President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed." His words remain painfully relevant. They expose something about the way power operates in our world.

On a vastly smaller scale, I was also reminded of the aggressive way NSW police handled the 6,000 protesters during the visit of Israeli President Isaac Herzog. In situations like these, leaders often justify their actions by pointing to threats or dangers posed by the "other." In the case of Iran, President Donald Trump claimed that Iran could develop nuclear weapons. In NSW, Premier Chris Minns described the protest situation as "combustible," suggesting potential danger even if nothing had yet occurred. In both cases, the narrative frames the other as the problem.

These are familiar patterns of power at work: suspicion, pre-emption, and justification. The other becomes a threat to be contained or neutralised.

Against this backdrop, the Gospel story stands in sharp contrast.

Jesus does not treat the Samaritan woman as a threat. His first words to her are simple: "Give me a drink." This is astonishing. By asking her for water, he breaks Jewish purity conventions. Receiving water from her could render him ritually unclean. She herself recognises the boundary being crossed. Yet Jesus sets aside the protective codes and conventions - those systems designed to safeguard identity and holiness - in order to make a human connection.

Continued over.....

More than that, he enters into a deep and searching spiritual conversation with her. He speaks directly, yet he honours her questions and engages her insights seriously. The radical nature of this encounter is underlined in verse 27: "Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman." His behaviour disrupts their assumptions.

Often the way we perceive "the other" shapes how they respond to us. When we assume others are dangerous, hostile, or evil, and treat them accordingly, we frequently draw out the very behaviour we fear. Our expectations become self-fulfilling.

The Gospel story makes this dynamic transparent. Instead of despising the Samaritan woman, Jesus dignifies her. He speaks with her. He listens. He reveals himself to her. And the outcome is remarkable: "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, 'He told me everything I have ever done.'" What begins as a simple request for water becomes a transformation that ripples outward into a whole community.

We cannot control the decisions of presidents or premiers. We cannot determine how nations wield their power. But neither are we required to allow their way of seeing the world to define reality for us.

In Lent we are invited to re-evaluate our own attitudes - our destructive and self-destructive patterns of thought and behaviour. We are called to examine how we see those who are different from us. Jesus reveals an alternative way of inhabiting the world: one marked not by fear and pre-emptive hostility, but by courageous engagement and human connection.

This is the worldview we are invited to contemplate and embody during this Lenten season.

WELCOME PITEERI

Nofri!

My name is Piteeri & I'm the new Milson St Hub Communications Coordinator. To start with, my main working days will be Tues. & Thurs., 8:30am-4pm.

My contact details are:

0493 094 231

piteeri.m@outlook.com

I am RemenKeemi, Indigenous Egyptian (known as Coptic in English).

I'm a mum to 4 adult children, 3 daughters & 1 son, & am an empty-nester. I live with my affectionate cat Lola. I moved to the region 6 months ago, after living in Wollongong for 30 years. I'm a swimmer & the ocean helps me connect with God.

I enjoy learning, so my professional background is mixed - Art, Teaching English to Adults, Missionary, Community Development, Social Media, & Adult Literacy.

I'm a theologian & also an activist for Aboriginal justice.

I look forward to getting to know this community & contributing to its wellbeing.

Piteeri



DIARY

Thursday 5 March

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

1.30-2.30pm **Bible Study at Charlestown Church – ALL WELCOME**

Friday 6 March

10.00am **World Day of Prayer 2026** at Glenrock Anglican Church (see more further in Contact)

Sunday 8 March 2026 – Lent 3

9.00am The Divine Worship

Leader and Preacher: Kim Langford

Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95; Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

Tuesday 10 March

10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

Wednesday 11 March

10.00am Ladies Fellowship at Charlestown

Thursday 12 March

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

10.30am Worship Service at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility

1.30-2.30pm **Bible Study at Charlestown Church – ALL WELCOME**

Friday 13 March

6.00pm Ladies Night at Kahibah

Saturday 14 March

10.30am **Friendship Circle meet at the Church**, then leaving for Maitland Art Gallery (see more information further in Contact)

Sunday 15 March 2026 – Lent 4

9.00am The Divine Worship

Leader: Beryl Gaul and Preacher: David Chegidden

1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

Tuesday 17 March

10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

Wednesday 18 March

Office closed – Jenny away (No Contact on Sunday 22 March)

Thursday 19 March

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

10.30am Worship Service at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility

1.30-2.30pm **Bible Study at Charlestown Church – ALL WELCOME**

Sunday 22 March 2026 – Lent 5

9.00am The Divine Worship

Leader: Sue Warren and Preacher: Rev. Tom

Ezekial 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45

Tuesday 24 March

10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

12.00pm Garden Suburb Ladies Fellowship at Wests

THE PRAYER PAGE



Prayer is the Voice of Faith

Pastoral Prayer Points

- * Those who are mourning loved ones
- * Family and friends of Barbara and Lily
- * Pam and Mert (care facility placement being sought)
- * Beryl
- * Rene Kelly
- * Nelda Marshall
- * Lorraine Pepper
- * Glen and Marion
- * Valmai
- * Janice and Don Wright
- * Kelly
- * Tony Sellen
- * Vicki
- * Pam and Ken
- * Lyn Benson
- * Jean
- * June Locker
- * Jacqueline Fenwick
- * Isabella
- * Eileen Dunn
- * Max
- * Don Humphries

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Congregational Prayer Points

- Church Council
- the role of Piteeri, our new Communications Coordinator for the Milson St. Hub.
- Major upgrades to the Project Reconnect website
- Worship Services
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Tom and Kathy on holidays
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- H.C.A. Loneliness and Isolation Symposium in May – Milson St. Hub Ministry
- 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 the situations in Israel, Palestine and Ukraine

Children & Family Worker Update



Piteeri has come up with an exciting Easter Event for children, we will be working on this activity in the coming weeks. Watch this space and our electronic notice board in foyer for more information.

I will also be leading an **All-Age Palm Sunday Service**, I encourage you to invite your family, friends & neighbours, to share in this special day as we lead into Holy week.

Blessings

Cathy



Ladies FELLOWSHIP

Wednesday 11 March

Will be held at Charlestown Church
from 10.00am

You are welcome to come and join us for
morning tea and a chat

ALL WELCOME

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE OF THE WEEK

Holy Communion: The Lord's Supper celebrates God's redemptive plan through the sacrificial death of Jesus. Through this meal of bread and wine (or grape juice) we join ourselves to Christ and feed on him in our hearts through faith.

Practice: Prepare yourself for Communion ahead of time. Read John 13: 1-17. Imagine you are there at the table with Jesus. What are your feelings and thoughts? How does it feel to have Jesus wash your feet? How does it feel to drink the cup knowing your own betrayals? Confess your sins and then attend Communion with what is in your heart to say to God.

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



The Facebook page for the Milson Street Hub has been launched! If you are on Facebook, go [here](#), and click on "Follow". From little things big things grow!



Milson Street *Hub*



MEDITATION/REFLECTION/SHARING

EXPLORING THE POETRY OF THE MYSTICS

Reading and listening to poetry before becoming silent and still. It engages the whole person-mind, heart and body. John Main wrote-" we soon pick up the currents of reality that give us direction and momentum...By stillness in the spirit we move in the ocean of God's love."

Saturday, March 28th 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: \$10.00

Morning Tea Provided at 9.30

RSVP by March 23rd

annecuskelly@hotmail.com or 0407436808



World Day of Prayer 2026

Nigeria

'I will give you rest: Come'

Friday 6 March
10am

Glenrock Anglican
Church
34 Hexham St, Kahibah
Contact Sue Warren



Charlestown Garden Suburb Congregation have some chairs looking for new home!!

Please contact Cathy Beeton 0409445933 or Paul Russell 0411236047 for more information

Available for viewing at the Uniting Church 24 Milson Street Charlestown – by appointment

Each type of chair can be stacked



4 Available



19 Available



8 Available

A Call to Prayer for Peace in the Middle East

The World Council of Churches has expressed grave concern over escalating military attacks in the Middle East and called for an immediate cessation of violence, the protection of civilian populations, and renewed diplomatic engagement.

As part of the global fellowship of churches, the Uniting Church in Australia stands alongside our ecumenical partners in prayerful solidarity. We share the deep concern for the safety of civilians, the stability of the region, and the urgent need for de-escalation and dialogue.

In a time when rhetoric intensifies and fear spreads quickly, I invite the Uniting Church to be what we are called to be — a praying people. We hold before God all whose lives are endangered, and we pray for communities here in Australia who are watching these events with deep concern for loved ones.

We recommit ourselves to being people of restraint, reconciliation and hope.

Prayer for Peace

God of Abraham and Sarah,
God of Hagar and Ishmael,
God of Isaac and Rebekah,
God revealed to us in Jesus Christ,
We bring before you the lands where our faith was born,
now shaken by escalating violence and deep uncertainty.
We pray for the people of Iran,
for the people of Israel,
and for all across the region living tonight with fear.
We pray for children woken by sirens,
for families seeking safety,
for those carrying grief, anger and anxiety.
Prince of Peace,
interrupt the cycle of violence.
Protect civilian life on every side.
Grant leaders wisdom and restraint.
Turn hearts from further destruction toward dialogue and de-escalation.
Call all nations to act with responsibility,
with care for human life,
and with respect for the obligations of international law.
Spirit of the Living God,
comfort those in Australia whose loved ones are in harm's way.
Strengthen Jewish, Muslim, Iranian, Arab and Christian communities who may feel vulnerable or unsettled.
Guard us from antisemitism, from Islamophobia, and from every form of hatred that rises in times of conflict.
Make your Church a place of safety, compassion and steady hope.
May fear give way to understanding.
May violence give way to courage for peace.
May justice and mercy meet.
In the name of Christ, who is our peace.
Amen.

President Rev Charissa Suli

Friendship Circle



A trip to Maitland Art Gallery on the 14 March leaving the Church at 10.30am with a Gallery inspection and Lunch at the gallery at 12.30pm

All Welcome

Contact Sue Warren on 0427 737 793 for transport

February Men's Breakfast - Mission to Seafarers and Stella Maris

Mark Spencer - Chaplain for Stella Maris (the Roman Catholic equivalent to Mission to Seafarers) spoke at the Men's Breakfast about his experiences with Stella Maris.

He came to this work after many years in the Catholic Education system and latterly for the church in the funeral industry. His talk was wide ranging and finished with an appeal for volunteers to drive the buses that bring sailors to their basin at Hannel Street and also for helpers to pack 1000 packages that are given out at Christmas to New Year.

Newcastle is the only port in Australia where Mission to Seafarers and Stella Maris work together from the same base - but both work together at a national level.

The February Men's Breakfast video is available on line Look [here](https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1168718264) to watch the video (<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/1168718264>)



CHARLESTOWN



Milson Street *Hub*



PLEASE NOTE

The Office will be closed on the 19 March so there will be no Contact for Sunday the 22 March 2026.

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 Street, 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

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>