



CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

18 December 2022



From Anne Threlfo

As we come together for our Worship and Blue Christmas service this morning we come with new and poignant reminders of the breadth and depth of loss in the life of our congregation, our community and in our own lives. Rev Tom has presided at another two funerals this week for people with connections to our congregation; Eric Hancock and Molly Wilson. We will remember them and their families today, along with all those whose earthly lives have reached their conclusion, particularly this year. As I write, news is coming through of a tragic situation in Queensland which has led to a number of deaths, including two police officers. About 50 people in NSW have died of Covid in the last week, and thousands are living with the loss of homes and businesses from flooding. Cost of living increases, and interest rate rises are cutting into family budgets and homelessness, domestic violence, and mental health challenges are complex and escalating. Many people known to us are facing significant health challenges and changing life circumstances.

Doesn't make for very Christmassy reading, does it? Perhaps it's all enough to cause you to turn off the TV, close down the news apps and shut off the radio, and not listen to any more bad news. (Which is sometimes quite necessary for your own well-being). At the very least you might be tempted to turn away because it feels so sad and uncomfortable. Paradoxically, I have often noticed that uncomfortable places are precisely where God is the most present – and this is the Christmassy part! If we look a little more deeply into difficult and distressing circumstances we find families caring for each other in sickness and grief, prayerful and supportive church families, communities drawing together in the face of tragedy, health care professionals caring for sick and dying patients, chaplains ministering in flood affected areas, and so many people who advocate for and support those in enormously challenging life circumstances. This is where God is at work.

God did not, does not and never will turn away from the breadth and depth of human grief, loss and suffering. In fact, God chose to become human in the most vulnerable way; as a homeless newborn, to a socially outcast young mother, under the umbrella of a violent and oppressive regime which would cause Jesus and his family to be refugees while he was still an infant. And this is before he was old enough to walk! God chose to come to us as one of us, exposed to all the difficulties which come from being human, and so is able to say to us: "I am beside you and within you. I will be here whatever happens to you and wherever you are. I came to be with you. You are my beloved."



DIARY

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

Tuesday 3 January

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

Thursday 5 January

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

Sunday 8 January

9.00am Worship Service – Leader, Sue Warren, Preacher – Project Reconnect

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43; Matthew 3:13-17

Tuesday 3 January

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

Thursday 5 January

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

Sunday 15 January – Epiphany 2

9.00am Holy Communion Service – Leader & Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart

Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; 1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42



**Blue
Christmas**

Today, Sunday 18 December 2022
9am at Charlestown or

Live and recorded at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgbGqDXyW>



Remembering those who are no longer with us

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

- * Family of Eric Hancock
- * Family of Molly Wilson
- * Elaine Ross
- * 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
- * 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

Maintained by SFED and Enid Power

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

- Families of victims shot in the Queensland massacre.
- 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



Christmas Services

- A Christmas Eve service will take place at Garden Suburb Uniting Church at 6.30pm. This service will have a family focus. All are welcome.
- There will be a Christmas Day service at 9am at Charlestown, which will livestreamed and recorded. Here is the link, which can be accessed live or any time after the service:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tEhhNtYzNyM>

Children & Family Worker Update



Hi Everyone

What a lot of fun we had at our Advent Workshop last Wednesday. Our theme was 'What's in a Name'. We looked at all the names given to Jesus in the Bible, we made picture frames & added each child's name & meaning to the frame, we made Christmas candle holders & a Christmas Canvas where the children used their imagination to design a Christmas picture.

I have added some photos, one photo is of the 3 children moving onto High School next year & will not be part of HKC, although Hayley will be joining us as a junior helper.

The other photos are of the Christmas gift tower one team worked together to build, the other a baby in a Manger & last is all the kids with the Christmas tree fairy bread.



If you have access to Facebook check out ChaGS page for more photos.

Thank you to my wonderful team without you these activities wouldn't be possible.

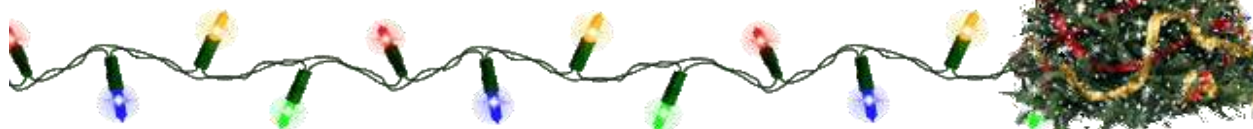
Cathy



Rev Tom will be on holiday from 2 – 8 January. If you have any concerns during this time, please contact your Elder, Anne Threlfo or Julie Fenwick.

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.



2023 SRE Dedication Service

Sunday 12 February

Date for the Diary 2.30pm

Charlestown Uniting Church

*All Welcome to come and support SRE
teachers and students*



A PASSING THOUGHT...

WARNING! This Article Should be Treated as PG RECOMMENDED

“...because Santa Claus is coming to town!” Well, no, he’s already been and done his ‘business’. So, let’s start digging a bit into what we are about to do.

Nicholas of Myra, modern Dense, Turkey, (bishop and Philanthropist) lived 270 – 342. His parents, who were fabulously wealthy, died when he was quite young. An early convert to Christianity, Nicholas was taken with Christ’s words: “sell what you have and give to the poor.”



In his Diocese, there was an extremely poor man, living with his three daughters. None were able to marry as the father didn’t have a dowry to present to any prospective suitor/husband. The well known alternative for girls in this situation was quite simple – they had to go into prostitution to earn a very meagre living. On a winter’s night, St Nicholas dropped a golden ball (or a bag of gold) down the chimney of the eldest daughter’s father’s home...which fell into one of her stockings left drying near the fire. Nicholas repeated this over the next succeeding years as each daughter became ‘of age’. (As a youngster, did you ever find an orange in the bottom of your Christmas stocking and thought ‘erg!’)

Nicholas was in the practice of silently going around his area between 6th December and 6th January distributing small gifts to children. This custom soon spread through Europe, particularly the Netherlands. where children would leave their clogs out overnight, to discover them filled with a present the next morning! Mind you, these were small, useful gifts...that would fit into a clog or stocking, not the mammoth productions of the current generation!!!



Early in the 1800’s many shiploads of Dutch settlers sailed to – what was then – named New Amsterdam, later to become New York City, bringing their customs with them. This was known as the Festival of Saint Nicholas (Saint – Santa, Nicholas – Claus) which then was taken up by the cartoonist Thomas Mast in the “Harper Weekly” of 1863 where he drew the, now all familiar caricature, of the large, tubby, jolly, heavy bewhiskered gent know universally as “Santa Claus” ...no reindeer and no tripping around the world in one night!

In England, during the reign of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, a similar festival was created by the Queen herself – were our red suited gent became known as “Father Christmas”.

Of course, all of the gift giving, from Saint Nicholas onwards, was but a poor reflection on the basic fact of John 3:16 that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him may not perish but have eternal life”...and the next bit, which seems to get lost...”Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but in order that the world might be **saved through him.**” (Bold print mine for greater emphasis)

God gave us the one perfect gift and so we, now, give a small gift of personal importance to the ones we love.

So, was Jesus born on 25th December? Well, no! That’s for another “Passing Thought”...

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:

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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>