



CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

9 April 2023



Moderator Simon Hansford – 2023 Easter Message

In the silent waiting before God speaks the creation's beginning,

and as God's breath is building over the waters, we are invited to listen, to attend. And God speaks light. And dark, and sky and sea and land and life and wonder. And humanity. There are stories woven throughout scripture, and our experience, where it is only in the silence that God's voice is heard. In our world, where silence is less and less likely, how shall we find the space to attend to what God might say, in between breaths, in the waiting?

Can we attend to God in the silence, in the whispered breath, when we are being subtly attuned only to wait for the next sound?

It is not only the audible distractions, there are also the "devices" which drag our attention and decimate our concentration, so that everything is truncated to bite-sized pieces of information - and misinformation. Türkiye and Syria slip from our screens and our minds because there's a new tax on millionaires or MAFS has another fabricated crisis. As we are trained for sound bite after TikTok, how we will discern what God has to say, when we need to pause, to pay attention? The measured steps to Easter - the journey we name as Lent - require pauses along the way; we lay burdens and distractions aside so that we might better heed what Christ has to offer us.

However, we have better, more colourful things to do and hear and see.

We can find a way for worship and witness to fit our culture, so everyone will be satisfied. If we fill our worship with content, then we can hold everyone's attention; we can craft a sermonette, so that there's barely a hindrance to our day and our discipleship; and, of course, silence is "dead space", so we trim that from our diet. Yet, Easter finds us, each and every year.





We have always tried to whittle God's presence from our own, and to shape it for our purposes.

Lent is offered to challenge that, gradually; Easter stands, at the heart of creation and history, to repudiate it. When we are sufficiently deceived to think of power as earthquake, wind and fire, a still, small voice, speaks in the silence and the dark. Before all the hallelujahs, the whisper of God is heard from Gethsemane to Golgotha. We would want to rush to glory, but there is more to hear and see. At the moment when Christ is silenced, when his execution echoes throughout creation, God's fullness is proclaimed to us. In the silence, we listen for what God, in Christ, is saying, and we wait. Here, crucified, is God.

There is no moment when God is more completely God than this.

This is God, for us, at the heart of history. In the deafening silence of the cross is Jesus Christ. There, at the foot of the cross, we wait. And there, at the tomb, we wait, holding every breath. Then, in the emptiness of the second, new, morning, everything is transformed. God's breath is stirring in the silence. God speaks light, and life and wonder. And renews our humanity.

We cannot rush here, nor tell this story in a sound bite.

We cannot sprint from cross to resurrection without attending to the death of Christ and the wonder of what God in Christ has done. We dare not let ourselves be distracted from this event of God residing at the core. For all those breaking, or broken; for all those who are lost, or who have lost; for all those believing themselves beyond hope, this story is essential. Our hallelujahs rise, because having waited with Christ in the silence, we see what God has done, and is doing. Our hope, our forgiveness, are here, because this event proclaims that death is not the whole story, that resurrected life through Christ speaks more fully than any utterance of death, and our emptiness is filled with the love and glory of God. Listen, if you have hope, in the silence, for what God will say.

DIARY

Wednesday 5 April

7.00pm Holy Week reflection at Hamilton Uniting Church – led by Rev Rob Hanks

Thursday 6 April

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

4.30pm Maundy Thursday Service at Garden Suburb Uniting Church

Friday 7 April

9.00am Good Friday Service at Charlestown Uniting Church

Saturday 8 April

10am Friendship Circle meet for morning tea at 16 Footers Club at Belmont

Sunday 9 April – EASTER DAY

9.00am **Worship Service including Holy Communion** – Leader Sue Warren,
Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart

Acts 10:34-43, Psalm 118:1-2, Colossians 3:1-4, John 20:1-18



Monday 10 April

No Worship service at Woodlands

Tuesday 11 April

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

Wednesday 12 April

10.00am Charlestown Ladies Fellowship Morning tea at Redhead Cafe

Thursday 13 April

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

Saturday 15 April

8.00am Men's Breakfast at Charlestown

Sunday 16 April – Easter 2

9.00am Worship Service – Leader & Preacher Rev Tom Stuart

Acts 2:14a, 22-32, Psalm 16, 1 Peter 1:3-9, John 20:19-31

Tuesday 18 April

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

7.00pm Stories: Hope and Possibilities with Tim Costello at Hamilton Uniting Church

Wednesday 19 April

9.30am Kid's Fun Day at Charlestown



Thursday 20 April

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

Sunday 23 April – Easter 3

9.00am Worship Service – Leader Mike Smith – Preachers Ken, Anne & Tony

Acts 2:14a, 36-41, Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19, 1 Peter 1:17-23, Luke 24:13-35

Monday 24 April

2.00pm Anzac Church Service at Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility
Led by Cardiff RSL and Pastor Grahame Pricter

Tuesday 25 April – Anzac Day

Thursday 27 April

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

1.30-2.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb

Sunday 30 April – Easter 4 – FELLOWSHIP SUNDAY

Acts 2:42-47, Psalm 23, 1 Peter 2:19-25, John 10:1-10

9.45am Morning tea

10.30am Worship Service in Hall – “How Are You Called?”

11.45am Lunch in hall

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

- * Jacqueline Fenwick and family following Bob's death
- * Peter Ferguson – infection delaying rehab
- * Isabella – infection, but in rehab
- * Linden
- * Eileen Dunn
- * Glenn, Donna and girls
- * Sue and Warren
- * Cat and Ezra
- * Enid Gaynor
- * John Booth having third dose of radiation. Pray for Gloria as she cares for him at home
- * Tony and Nan
- * Mert and Pam
- * Judith and family
- * Ashley (in Respite) and Lorraine (DVT)
- * Ken MacDonald (home from hospital) and Sharon
- * Rhonda White and family (after death of Bert)
- * Enid Power
- * Fred Bryant
- * Max

Congregational Prayer Points

- Cathy Beeton and Holiday Kids
- Neos and Tom's role week by week
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Lease of Whitebridge property
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- New state elected parliamentarians
- Victims of floods, earthquakes and fires
- Wilfreda's orphanage
- The situation in Ukraine and other trouble spots

Maintained by SFED and Enid Power



Sunday 30 April

9.45am - Morning Tea

10.30am - Worship Service

Shared Soup lunch to follow

Please bring a small plate of either sandwiches or slice/biscuits to share (as you are able).



Notes from Church Council Chairperson

This week's Church Council meeting began with the reading for Holy Tuesday, John 12: 20-26, where we looked particularly at verses 24 and 25: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." There followed a discussion about what it actually means for us in our daily lives to die to ourselves. The author of the devotion suggested that our places of blindness are where we need to die. In other words, we look for the ways in which, and in the places in our lives where we are most guarded, insulated and isolated. Where might this be for you?

Here is a summary of the items discussed in the meeting:

- The Neos Support group has met again, and heard from Tom about conversations in the community, particularly around the subject of the lack of public space. Tom and I also met with Rev Toni Wein from Glenrock Anglican, and Father Tony Potts, the local Catholic Priest.
- The SFED group is currently making the Spirituality of Age exercises available to the congregation in fortnightly intervals, as explained in Contact last week, and today.
- Those members of the congregation who have particular needs were added to the prayer list.
- The Finance team reported that our current income is meeting current expenses. Work has begun on the budget for the next year, and will be considered at the May Church Council meeting.
- Cathy reported that the Easter School Assembly at Charlestown East was successful, and that SRE teacher Ben Waters assisted. There is a need for more SRE teachers, so if you know of anyone who may be interested, please put them in touch with Cathy.
- There has been further interest from potential tenants for the Whitebridge property. We have been in conversation with Uniting Property about the Charlestown and Garden Suburb properties, who have asked a local agent for up to date information about the likely lease income for both properties. This is for the purpose of information gathering.
- The Covid Safety plan has been updated, and will be displayed on noticeboards in all our buildings.

You are welcome to contact me if you have any questions about these, or any other matters.

In this Holy Week, May the Spirit,
who strengthens us to suffer with Christ
that we may share his glory,
set your minds on life and peace.
And may the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among us and remain with us always.

Anne Threlfo

Ph: 0439 754 376

Email: annethrelfo@gmail.com



Children & Family Worker Update



Hi Everyone

What a lovely morning we had last Sunday as Olive Spink was baptised. I have included a photo of Tom, Olive, Mum Jamee-Leigh & Dad Brayden.

The church was full, 7 extra children as well as Savannah & Sebastian to hear & respond to the children's message. A playcentre/holiday kids family with the girls now well & truly in their teens, as part of the wider baptism family, a great time of catching up on what everyone is doing from a number of us.



Holiday Kids Club 19th April, we still have places available if you have any children in your neighbourhood you think may like to join us, registration forms are in the church foyer.

As we go into this Easter weekend I am Praying your Easter will be bright with the hope and joy of our risen Saviour.

Blessings
Cathy

Bullet Proofing Yourself Against Depression

Depression is a serious and tricky illness

Unfortunately, it can also go unrecognized for a long period of time – often especially true for men.

People suffering with depression can become really good at covering the symptoms or making excuses. Some may not even realise that there's a problem. But 1 in 8 men will experience depression, and blokes make up an average seven out of every nine suicides every single day in Australia.

Learn about ways to "bullet-proof" yourself against depression: recognise the signs, get in early and make a difference, keep yourself staying more mentally healthy.

Gwenda Brownell (almost-retired psychologist) will help us understand how depression shows up differently in men, and present strategies that help with keeping the "black dog" away.

A Men's Breakfast

at Charlestown Uniting Church - 24 Milson St

8am Saturday 15th April

Cost \$12 RSVP: Paul Russell

pmraus74@gmail.com, or 0411 236 047

or sign-up sheet in the foyer.

Please advise of any special dietary requirements

By Wednesday 12th April 2023

Please do not attend if you are unwell or have been to a Covid-19 hotspot in the previous 14 days.

A PASSING THOUGHT...

You have a very dear friend whom you have just been told is very seriously ill and not many days hence, it has been prognosed that they will die. In all probability, you would arrange to visit pretty quick smart – or at least make a telephone call...some sort of message to convey your concern and an assurance that you will keep your 'prayer wheels' spinning!

Well, Jesus was over on the banks of the Jordon River and, no, he was not reclining on a deck chair in the sun...just in case you were wondering...but he did delay in any response, saying that he was staying yet another two days before pushing off! Really, Jesus?!

While Jesus, with his disciples, is walking back to Bethany – a one day journey – the inevitable has happened ...his very dear friend, Lazarus, is now dead and buried ...whoops! Now, please read the text of John 11: 17-44.

With my many years of ministry served in the central west, I believe I have conducted more funerals than I've had baked dinners (pretty close, anyway!) The number of times some folk arrive late (often the same contingent...) to me, had an amusing side. Country funerals are packed well before 'kick off' with the late comers standing at the back – and when that is full, spreading themselves along either side wall... like a row of 'naughty children in class.



It's afterwards when the excuses - sorry reasons - start flowing that it becomes embarrassingly comical. You see, there are no traffic lights, nor traffic jams to hold you up in the country! Mind you, the odd flock of sheep, or mob of cattle, being herded across the road, could well be considered as satisfactory...but if you were four days late...?

Moving right along! You know this story, I'm quite sure. Jesus is confronted with his dead and buried friend and is beset by Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha, together with their accusatory friends at this late arrival.

Two verses are very noteworthy here; 35 to give us a deeper understanding of Jesus' emotions as a normal person - and the God given authority of the end of 44 – "Unbind him, and let him go."

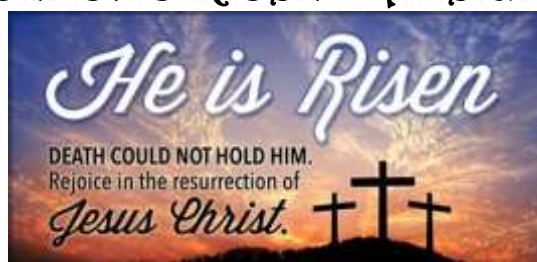


So, for us, this coming Easter Morning, we go back to verses 25 and 26. With great affirmation we would tell anyone who wanted to know that, yes, I believe in "the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen" (from the Apostles' Creed) as we said together at last Sunday's Baptismal Service.

If this is so, what is keeping us "bound" like Lazarus, so that we seem to be unable to do that which Jesus is asking of us? You see, they are the 'dead bits' of us – now – in our Spirit that stops us from doing things that we want to do, while allowing us to do things that we would rather not do at all! (St Paul had this problem, too, remember?)

Now, towards the end of Holy Week, is a wonderful time to have a talk with Jesus and ask him to – please – release you from your bondage before you come to celebrate with him this Easter Day when you will truly be able to proclaim:

Christ is Risen – Alleluia!



John 11:17-44 New Revised Standard Version

¹⁷ When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. ¹⁸ Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, ¹⁹ and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. ²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. ²¹ Martha said to Jesus, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him.' ²³ Jesus said to her, 'Your brother will rise again.' ²⁴ Martha said to him, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.' ²⁵ Jesus said to her, 'I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, ²⁶ and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?' ²⁷ She said to him, 'Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world.'

²⁸ When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, 'The Teacher is here and is calling for you.' ²⁹ And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. ³⁰ Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. ³¹ The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. ³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!' ³⁷ But some of them said, 'Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?'

³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, 'Take away the stone.' Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, 'Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead for four days.' ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, 'Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?' ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.' ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!' ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, 'Unbind him, and let him go.'





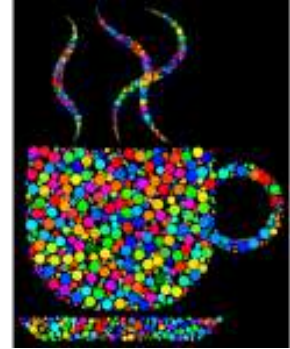
Charlestown Friendship Circle

Saturday 8th April, 10.00am

at the 16 Footers Club, Belmont for

Morning Tea

All Welcome



Charlestown Ladies Fellowship

Wednesday 12th April

Morning tea at Redhead Cafe

Leaving the Church at 10.00am

All Welcome



Have you any used Postage Stamps?

Margaret Barlow will trim and sort them.
Stamps can be supplied on cut off envelopes with at least 2cm of paper left around the stamp for trimming.

In July 2021 a grant of \$1,000.00 was given from the Stamp Committee to Charlestown Worship Centre to assist in the purchase of a remote control camera so that we could continue to live stream and record our worship services.





stories

Hope and Possibilities
a world in need : gambling reform

Tim Costello

with music from Heather Price

APRIL
18
2023

7pm Tuesday 18th April 2023
Hamilton Uniting Church
150 Beaumont St, Hamilton
Information m: 0407401833
e: ucahambro@bigpond.com

**ALL
WELCOME**



Some of our Church Contacts:

Minister

Rev Tom Stuart
M: 0427 625 502
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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>

Spiritual Exercise - The Next Chapter - Spiritual Autobiography

Think about your spiritual progression through life as chapters of your spiritual autobiography. You don't need to write out each chapter. For the purposes of this exercise, giving each chapter an apt title is enough.

Chapter One describes the spiritual worldview into which you were born. If you were to give this chapter a title, what would it be? Now think about what happened next: did you go through a state of rebellion? Was there a time when you more fully embraced the beliefs into which you were born? Perhaps you found an alternate community that allowed you to deepen your experience of your faith?

Your book may be three chapters, ten chapters, or as many as you need to fully tell your story. How ever many chapters you choose, give each one a title and write it down.

Now, if you haven't done so already, add a last chapter to the book: your spiritual aspirations, hopes and beliefs about the future. Feel free to define "future" as you wish, to take you through to the end of life and beyond. You can simply give this a title or take the time to write out the chapter in full.

(See over for an example)

An example of the Spiritual Autobiography by Sue Warren.

I hope this will make clearer how you might do this exercise. Yours might be quite different, but in case you are unsure how to tackle the exercise, maybe this will help.

Chapter 1. The Groundwork to a Christian Biblical Worldview I was nurtured in faith by my family who were practising and devout Christians who took me to church each Sunday, Sunday school and who held Bible Study groups in their home. As we lived in country areas, we attended whatever denomination services were available, and so I had the benefit of a variety of perspectives- Methodist, Brethren, Baptist and Presbyterian. They all taught faithfully from the Bible and I loved learning Bible texts and hearing Bible Stories.

Chapter 2. Maturing in faith

At high school I attended Inter School Christian Fellowship, many Christian camps and leadership workshops which enabled me to explore my faith and search answers to my questions. I declared my faith and belief in God by being baptised at the age of seventeen.

Chapter 3. Exploring Faith

At University I linked up with organisations like SCM and EU which encouraged me to be able to express why I was a Christian and to reach out to fellow students endeavouring to understand the different worldviews expressed. At this stage of my life I really wanted to follow God's plan for my life as I married and chose a career in teaching. Christian Endeavour was a group both Mike and I had belonged to and the leaders and structure really nurtured our faith, encouraged us in prayer and leadership training. This group continues to be, even to this day, a special fellowship group where we share our faith.

Chapter 4. Family Life

Children were a blessing and made me very aware of our God-given responsibilities to nurture and encourage them in faith. It also brought many challenges, especially during teenage years, so prayer was a necessary tool in order to survive! Bible Study groups were a source of fellowship and important for continued development, growth and understanding of God's love and ways.

Chapter 5. Christian Schooling and Teaching.

I spent a wonderful 26 years teaching Christian values in Christian Schools where the subjects I taught were explored with a Christian focus. I attended conferences and workshops where incredible times of teaching and faith building were experienced. I still keep in touch with these colleagues and enjoy their fellowship.

Chapter 6. Trust God in All Circumstances Our Newcastle family grew to 10 living under one roof, my elderly mother had dementia, I took on Subject Coordinator role at work, there were increased responsibilities at Church and we experienced some medical issues. During this time I needed to put my trust in God daily and in hindsight, I can say He was faithful and sustained me.

Chapter 7. Contemplative practices.

In more recent times practices such as Lectio Divina, the Examen, Mindfulness, Meditation, Centering Prayer etc have expanded and enriched my expression of faith as well as participation in Contemplative services and Quiet Days. I have learnt to wait on God and to become more aware of God's presence in my life.

Chapter 8. Hopes and Dreams

Death is inevitable but because I believe in the gift of salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus, I do not fear death. In the meantime, even though my physical and mental capacities may well reduce, I want to live life to the full, practising that each moment of my life is a moment with God. That causes me to be grateful that he loves me unconditionally, that I am not alone, that His peace is able to flood into my soul and it enables me to rejoice in the hope of eternity spent with my Heavenly Father.