



# CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting  
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

27 August 2023



## From Anne Threlfo

I recently watched a documentary on Netflix about Wham!, the British pop duo who had a number of hits in the mid-1980s. One of the two, George Michael, went on to have an enormously successful solo career until his untimely death in 2016. This documentary reminded me of what great songs Wham! and George wrote and sang, and led me to listen to some of them again.

George had a turbulent life, even in pop star terms. His early interest in music was discouraged by his father, he was shy and unpopular, and then had to adjust to fame while still a teenager. He was also beginning to realise that he was gay, which he didn't reveal publicly until 1998.

George was a talented and driven songwriter, producer and performer, projecting a public image which was at odds with his private life. This tension made him a difficult person to be around at times, led to substance abuse, and secrecy about his closest relationships.

In 1991 George met Anselmo Feleppa, whom he considered the love of his life, but tragically, in 1993, Anselmo died of AIDS. George found the grief overwhelming, partly because he was unable to speak openly about his pain. It took three years for him to emerge with the writing of "Jesus to a Child", a moving song in tribute to Anselmo, the love they had shared, and the impact this love had made to his life. (See lyrics on next page.)

This sublime and melancholy song is still capable of moving me to tears. But what does all this have to do with God, you might ask? Well, there's a number of things which come to mind:

- God is present in every person, including gay, provocative, promiscuous, drug addicted popstars who in George's case just happen to be gifted with an ability to convey the transcendence of love, even, or maybe because of his acquaintance with grief and tragedy. Furthermore, of all the metaphors he could have used to describe his experience of love, George used an image of Jesus gazing at a child. Here is an image of unconditional and life shaping love, "You smiled at me like Jesus to a child." Even in grief there is a recognition in this song that he has been transformed by love.
- This song also expresses the eternal nature of love which is not extinguished even when death brings separation. Love and life remain. Does this sound familiar?
- God speaks to our bodies and hearts just as God speaks to our minds. So what might God be inviting me to notice when I am moved by this song? It was written almost 30 years ago, by someone who didn't identify as a Christian, although I suspect he had some experience of spirituality. There is something in the poignancy of this song which connects with my experience of God and life, as music and poetry can so often do. I invite you to notice your visceral or bodily reactions when music, art, words, a conversation, nature and any other aspect of life takes your breath away, or moves you to tears or laughter. God is in the midst of such experiences, so let's stay, sit and savour each opportunity to be present to the one who smiles at us, as Jesus does to a child.

Incidentally, it became known after George died that he had donated all the royalties from "Jesus to a Child" to a children's charity, as well as many millions of pounds he quietly gave to dozens of other charities and individuals..... And Jesus said to the rich man, "sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven."

### Jesus to a Child

Kindness

In your eyes, I guess

You heard me cry

You smiled at me

Like Jesus to a child

I'm blessed

I know

Heaven sent

And Heaven stole

You smiled at me

Like Jesus to a child

And what have I learned

From all this pain

I thought I'd never feel the same

About anyone

Or anything again

But now I know

When you find your love

When you know that it exists

Then the lover that you miss

Will come to you on those cold,

cold nights

When you've been loved

When you know it holds such

bliss

Then the lover that you kissed

Will comfort you when there's no

hope in sight

Sadness

In my eyes

No one guessed

Or no one tried

You smiled at me

Like Jesus to a child

Loveless and cold

With your last breath

You saved my soul

You smiled at me

Like Jesus to a child

And what have I learned

From all these tears

I've waited for you all those years

And just when it began

He took you away

But I still say

When you find love

When you know that it exists

Then the lover that you miss

Will come to you on those cold,

cold nights

When you've been loved

When you know it holds such

bliss

Then the lover that you kissed

Will comfort you when there's no

hope in sight

So the words you could not say

I'll sing them for you

And the love we would have

made

I'll make it for two

For every single memory

Has become a part of me

You will always be

My love

Well, I've been loved

So I know just what love is

And the lover that I kissed

Is always by my side

Oh, the lover I still miss

Was Jesus to a child

*Songwriter: George Michael*

*Jesus to a Child lyrics © Warner*

*Chappell Music, Inc*

**Listen to the song here:**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNBj4EV\\_hAo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNBj4EV_hAo)

**Do you own this lovely  
bowl?**

Or know how it came to be at  
Charlestown church?

If so, please speak to Julie Fenwick  
ASAP to claim it.

Thanks!



# DIARY

## **Tuesday 22 August**

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Frankie & Co Café at Lake Macquarie  
12.00pm Garden Suburb Ladies Fellowship

## **Thursday 25 August**

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – **Muffin Break outside Coles at Charlestown Square**  
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb

## **Sunday 27 August – Pentecost 13**

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader & Preacher Rev Tom Stuart  
*Exodus 1:8 – 2:10; Psalm 124; Romans 12:1-8; Matthew 16:13-20*

## **Tuesday 29 August**

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

## **Wednesday 30 August**

- 3.30pm Garden Suburb Property Committee meeting

## **Thursday 31 August**

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Muffin Break at Charlestown Square  
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb

## **Sunday 3 September – Forest Sunday**

- 9.00am Worship Service – Leader & Preacher Rev Tom Stuart  
Children's Corner with Cathy  
*Genesis 2: 4b-22; Psalm 139: 13-16; Acts 17: 22-28; John 3: 1-16*

## **Monday 4 September**

- 10.00am Visitation at Garden Suburb Aged Care

## **Tuesday 5 September**

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

## **Thursday 7 September**

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Muffin Break at Charlestown Square  
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb  
6.00pm Ladies Night at Kahibah

## **Saturday 9 September**

- Friendship Circle – details to be announced

## **Sunday 10 September – Land Sunday**

- 9.00am Worship Service - Leader Anne Threlfo Preacher Rev Tom Stuart  
*Genesis 3: 14-19; 4: 8-16; Psalm 139; 7-12; Romans 5: 12-17; Matthew 12: 38-40*

## **Tuesday 12 September**

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

## **Wednesday 13 September**

- Ladies Fellowship – to be announced

## **Thursday 14 September**

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – Muffin Break at Charlestown Square  
11.00am Worship Service at Garden Suburb Aged Care  
1.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb

## **Sunday 17 September – Outback Sunday**

- 9.00am Holy Communion Worship Service - Leader and Preacher Rev'd. Tom  
*Joel 1: 8-10, 17-20; Psalm 18: 6-19; Romans 8: 18-27; Matthew 3: 13- 4: 2*

## **Monday 18 September**

- 10.00am Visitation at Garden Suburb Aged Care

## **Tuesday 19 September**

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



# THE PRAYER PAGE



"God speaks in the silence of the heart.  
Listening is the beginning of prayer."

*Mother Teresa*

## Pastoral Prayer Points

- \* Kathryn Gray
- \* Glenn Pepper and family
- \* Sharon MacDonald and family
- \* Gloria Booth and family
- \* Tony Sellen and family
- \* Anne
- \* Mac
- \* Jacqueline Fenwick
- \* Peter Ferguson
- \* Nola
- \* Isabella
- \* Ashley back at Warrabrook
- \* Janice Wright
- \* Glenda O'Donahue
- \* Eileen Dunn
- \* Mert and Pam
- \* Judith and family
- \* Lorraine Pepper
- \* Enid Power
- \* Fred Bryant
- \* Max

Maintained by SFED and Enid Power

## Congregational Prayer Points

- Tom and Kathy
- Pray for congregational members participating in the spirituality of Age exercises each week
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Lease of Whitebridge property
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Worship Committee
- Church Council

## Wider Community Prayer Points

- The situation in Sudan where thousands have taken refuge in Chad but are suffering from disease, malnutrition and poverty
- Men's Breakfast
- Consequences of climate change around the world
- Preparations for Voice Referendum – truth telling will be an important priority
- The situation in Ukraine and other trouble spots
- Fabian, children and Wilfreda suffering heart failure
- Tom and NEOS as he follows ideas and opportunities including connections with Wesley Mission at Windale



# Children & Family Worker Update

Hi Everyone



As I mentioned a couple of weeks ago Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> of August was a big SRE fund raising day for both High School SRE teachers & Hunter Christian SRE for Primary SRE teachers.



I am so very happy to announce that both days were a great success, I was involved with HCSRE High Tea at Garden Suburb which was a wonderful afternoon of friendship, food & wonderful guest speakers in Lysander & Laurinda Lawrence, Lysander has been teaching SRE in both Primary & High Schools around the Lake Mac & Newcastle area for many years, while his wife Laurinda is a Primary school Chaplain & an author, both had fantastic stories to tell. The High Tea was a sell-out of 70 guests along with fantastic results from our silent auction.

While the High School Fund Raiser which Paul Russell was involved in was at The Willows an afternoon of musical delights & afternoon tea. Paul informed me that it was a most successful afternoon with the sell-out crowd, having a wonderful time. Thank you to all who supported these two events it all goes towards making a big difference in the life of the children who come along to our SRE classes in both Primary & High School.

**Cathy**

## **Walking Together Training**

**Hosted by The Hunter Community Alliance**

At Toronto Uniting Church, 118 The Boulevard, Toronto

Thursday 21 September – 5.30pm to 8.45pm

Cost: \$15 including dinner OR FREE

In this half-day workshop, participants gain a deeper understanding of who we are as a nation and how to take meaningful action towards reconciliation. The content covers the importance of a Voice to Parliament, how individuals and organisations can play a role in ensuring it is established, and why reconciliation is an ongoing journey that requires action from us all.

You'll learn about:

- The invitation to all Australians in the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- The importance of Voice, Treaty and Truth
- A Voice to Parliament – to the referendum and beyond
- The concept of 'Makarrata'
- Accepting the invitation in the Uluru Statement with purposeful advocacy that advances reconciliation in Australia

Tickets and more information here:

<https://events.humanitix.com/walking-together-training-hunter-sep-21st-toronto-uniting-church>

# UNITING CHURCHES OF THE HUNTER

.....coming together for joy.....

Songs to lift your Voice  
and your Spirit  
in perfect harmony!

**SINGLETON UNITING  
CHURCH**

**SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>  
2PM**

**FREE ENTRY**

Come together to listen and to sing!

# Song Fest!

## **Some of our Church Contacts:**

### **Minister**

Rev Tom Stuart

M: 0427 625 502

E: [tom@thestuarts.id.au](mailto:tom@thestuarts.id.au)

### **Administration:**

P: 4943 4019

E: [office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au](mailto: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](mailto: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>





## Making Amends

In *The Gift of Years*, author Joan Chittister writes,

*One of the functions – one of the gifts – of aging is to become comfortable with the self we are, rather than to mourn what we are not. It is a moment of enlightenment when we realize that the years have grown us as well as sustained us. We are of more substance now than we were when we were young, whatever we did in the past, wherever we were when we did it. The fact is that twinges of regret are a step-over point in life. They invite us to revisit the ideals and motives that brought us to where we are now.*

It is at this point, at last, that you have made amends for everything of the past that is rectifiable and have become firmly committed to addressing new causes for remorse in the present moment as you encounter them and as they occur. As the twelve-step programs teach us, you come to accept that there are things you cannot change; you have the courage to change the things you can; and you have growing wisdom that enhances your ability to recognize the difference. At this point you stop living your life by looking only in the rear-view mirror and point your nose back into the heat of life. In the present moment, as we wrote earlier, you can find it is serious and constructive enough to sometimes or even often ponder the mystery of the stars and planets, the birth of a child, the love radiating from the eyes of a favourite pet. You become, in fact, not only a person who takes his or her spiritual and psychological growth seriously, but you become a mystic.

This is a four-step exercise. Do one step at a time and resist the urge to read ahead.

1. Write down ten of your biggest regrets, occasions for guilt or shame that you still carry with you. After you've written them down, return for step 2.
2. Circle every item on the list that you are able to do something about; offer an apology, make amends, or rectify in some way or other. When you are done with this list, make a commitment to yourself to do so as courageously, sensitively, and quickly as possible.
3. Underline everything else on the list.
4. Release each of the underlined items in whatever way you deem appropriate. You may want to write them down on a separate list and burn them. You may want to bless and release every item by imaging each one growing wings and flying off into the distance. Bring creativity and compassion to yourself, with equal amounts of forgiveness and acceptance, as you release all that no longer serves you.