



CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation



30 June 2024

From Rev Tom

When I was a boy, I had a curious issue with my legs. It was simply this. If I was sitting in a chair and somebody raised my feet to the seat height out in front of me my legs would not straighten. My feet would be the same height as the seat but my knees would be bent. I guess this was in the late 1960s. I didn't know much about what was going on in the adult world so I had to presume what actually happened. But this is how the story goes. My parents were very devout Methodist Christians. They both taught Sunday School. They were involved in the Christian Endeavour study group. They were involved in everything that was happening in the church. I guess that Mum and Dad heard that there was a "healer" in town. So, I found myself being taken to a healer. My Dad showed the man how I couldn't straighten my legs. The man sat in a chair in front of me and lifted my feet and breathed deeply. It seemed his breathing took a lot of effort, or that whatever he was doing made him breath heavily. He didn't speak and he didn't pray, or at least he didn't pray out loud. When he was doing this my legs straightened. My knees lowered so my legs were straight from my feet to my hips. He then showed dad something about my hips and then did his heavy breathing again and pointed out a change. I think my father might have given the man some money, and we left. I find it a little embarrassing to tell that story now. Was the "healer" a charlatan? Perhaps so. Was my father duped? He could have been. I know that I had this issue with my legs and didn't after that. Even then I thought that was weird. In any case, it is a story that comes to mind when I read the Gospel passage for this week. It is Mark 5:21-43. It is the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter. Jairus was a leader in the synagogue. This is significant because Jairus took quite a risk asking Jesus for help. Jesus was a controversial individual and most of the established leaders thought very poorly of him and rejected his teaching and ministry. I suspect if it wasn't for Jairus' daughter he would have been the same. He would have nodded disapprovingly with all the rest about this rabble-rouser. But with his daughter perilously ill he was thrust out of his usual state of being. He saw his world differently. He knew the conventional and the orthodox ways were not going to save his daughter. I suspect that Jairus was even acting out of step with his own better judgment. But he even knew that his better judgment was no use today. His better judgement had the inevitable outcome of the death of this daughter. So, the passage says that Jairus fell at Jesus' feet! It says that Jairus begged Jesus repeatedly. He asked Jesus to lay his hands on Jairus' daughter so she would be well. While nowhere near as dramatic I see something of that in my own Dad. My Dad saw the opportunity to resolve an issue with his son. I can't help but wonder if he took me to see the "healer" against his own better judgment. I believe there is a lesson here for us all. The lesson is about the Christian path. There is something about our path being one of letting go of our better judgment. It is about stepping out from the death, the decay, and the sense of scarcity in our ordinary thinking. It seems from this story it is about first being captured by love, driven by love, desperate for that which we love. And then allowing that motivation to push us beyond deciding things, and doing things, the ordinary way. Stepping out, even if we feel embarrassment among friends, or even in our own eyes. This seems to be the very invitation expressed by this week's gospel story.

DIARY

Thursday 27 June

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area opposite Butcher at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb Church

Sunday 30 June – Pentecost 6

- 9.00am Worship Service. Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom
2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27; Psalm 130; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15; Mark 5:21-43

Monday 1 July

- 1.30pm SFED
10.00am Garden Suburb Aged Care Pastoral Visit
7.00pm Girls Night Out at Garden Suburb – Christmas in July

Tuesday 2 July

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

Thursday 4 July

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area opposite Butcher at Charlestown Square
1.30-2.30pm Bible Study at Garden Suburb Church

Sunday 7 July – Pentecost 7

- 9.00am Worship Service. Leader and Preacher: Rev'd Tom
Including Children's Corner with Cathy
2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13

Monday 8 July

- 1.30pm SFED

Tuesday 9 July

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

Wednesday 10 July

- 9.30-3.00 Holiday Kids Club – Crazy Olympics**

Thursday 11 July

- 10.00am Morning tea in the Community – common seated area opposite Butcher at Charlestown Square
10.30am Worship Service at Garden Suburb Aged Care

Friday 12 July

- 10–11.45am Grief, Loss and Change at Toronto Uniting Church
6.00pm Ladies night at Kahibah

Sunday 14 July – Pentecost 8

- 9.00am Worship Service. Leader: Margaret White and Preacher: Rev'd Tom
2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Psalm 24; Ephesians 1:3-14; Mark 6:14-29
Congregation Meeting following the Service

Monday 15 July

- 1.30pm SFED
10.00am Garden Suburb Aged Care Pastoral Visit

Tuesday 16 July

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

THE PRAYER PAGE



As part of the Uniting Church 35 days of Prayer pray for Luga Brae Bronte Uniting Church and access the prayers available each day on line, by joining Uniting in Prayer 2024.

Pastoral Prayer Points

* those in our congregation whose loved ones have died in recent times

* Liz and Peter

* Nelda Marshall

* Mike Warren

* Elaine Ross

* Vivianne

* Shirley Elkin

* Lorraine Pepper

* Vicki

* Lesley

* Judith Fuller battling cancer

* Pam and Ken

* Lyn Benson

* Jean

* Fred Bryant

* June Locker

* Ryan Walpole

* Kathryn Gray

* Jacqueline Fenwick in Rehab at Lingard Hospital for a couple of weeks

* Isabella

* Janice Wright

* Eileen Dunn

* Mert

* Judith and family

* Enid Power

* Max

* Tom and Kathy

* Don Humphries

Congregational Prayer Points

- Church Council
- Give thanks for the sale of Whitebridge property
- pray for guidance and discernment missional use of buildings into the future
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Worship Committee

Wider Community Prayer Points

- The orphanage
- Tom and Neos
- HCA and ongoing issues of homelessness, affordable housing and climate change
- Those affected by climate change in Australia eg floods, droughts and fires
- Pray that a cease fire agreement will be negotiated between Israel and Hamas and that there will be relief from all the suffering
The situation in Ukraine and other trouble spots





The Hunter Presbytery Prayer Diary



This diary provides an opportunity to pray each week for congregations in the Presbytery. By praying together, we can encourage one another in mission, as we grow in faith and unity and develop understanding and relationships across the region. Each week there will be information and a prayer for each of the congregations in the Hunter Presbytery. This week we pray for:

16 June 2024 – Maitland - Rutherford Uniting Church

Rutherford UC is a small congregation with a big heart. We meet for worship every Sunday and during the week we have a variety of groups which meet for fellowship, exercise, painting, sewing, and Kids' Bible Study. We are part of the newly developing Maitland Area Uniting Churches Mission and 3 of our members are lay worship leaders who serve congregations from Tarro to Dungog. We have been gradually growing over the last ten years, but most of our members are retirees and our current leaders are tiring. Our church is ideally placed adjacent to the Rutherford shopping precinct and our vision is to eventually become a 'shop front for God' to the community.

Prayer: We ask you to pray that God will bless our congregation and enliven our faith and witness by the power of his Holy Spirit to draw more people into the faith and love of our fellowship. Pray that God will strengthen and sustain our current leaders and raise up new leaders to take over their responsibilities. And ask God to bring ordained ministry agents with passion and vision to lead the Maitland Area Uniting Churches into our new future. Amen.



Congregational Meeting

There will be a Congregation Meeting on

Sunday 14 July

following worship at Charlestown.

Agenda items will include the 2024/25 Budget, an update on Neos, and an update on property matters.

Please contact David Chegwidden if you would like to add any other agenda items.

G'day to my Christian Brothers and Sisters,

Four days ago was the sixth month 'anniversary' of my stroke (which makes it only six months to Christmas...just say in'!). 'Twas significant in as much as the neurological specialists had said it would take three to six months for any effects to diminish – so what you see now – is what you've got! My walking is still erratic, though that is the effect of peripheral neuropathy.



If I haven't spoken to you previously, please accept this as my abject thanks for your sterling prayer support during this period for not only me, but Beryl as well. It was the prayers of the faithful to our Saviour Jesus that has brought about this miraculous healing in my life.

Agapa,

Graeme.

Children & Family Worker Update



Holiday Kids

Fun Club

Come along for
Our Crazy Olympics



Our Holiday Kids Club has been transferred from Charlestown Church to Garden Suburb, same day, time & activities.

If you have passed the flyer onto any families please just let them know of the change of venue, I will be sure to notify families booking in.

I am in need of someone who may like to help with morning tea on that day, if you think you can spare a couple of hours on the 10th please contact me.

Some good news from SRE - one of my teachers has told me this encouraging story, from her class at Wiripaang School *"I teach a Special Needs class K-6. One day recently I asked if anyone would like to pray. A Kinder student who is mostly non verbal put up her hand. I invited her to come out the front, and she prayed "God, you are Great..." - How wonderful is that!*

Cathy



Toronto Uniting Church is hosting a workshop on

Grief, Loss and Change

facilitated by Mandy Cox, Bereavement Counsellor and Educator.

A repeat workshop owing to a strong demand for the previous workshop

This is an introduction to caring for others, and for ourselves, through the experience of grief, loss and change. Learn about the impacts of loss and change, ways to support someone who is grieving, and when grief gets stuck – what then?

Friday 12 July at 10am – 11.45am

Toronto Uniting Church
118 The Boulevard, Toronto

A free workshop, but please register here:

<https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1247579>

for catering purposes.

Practices That Transform Us

Relinquish the False Self

Each of us has a beautiful true self inside of us. It is God's gift to us. But many of us can hardly take this in. Somewhere life taught us that our true self wasn't welcome or safe or wanted. Consequently, we learned to hide our true self. In its place we constructed a false self. This self has a defensive, nonresilient, mistrustful and reactive core. This reactive core is at the centre of our disordered relationships. It sabotages our ability to trust God and others. The apostle Paul tells us to "put off" the false self— our sinful nature— and put on our true identity in Christ (Ephesians 4: 22-24; Romans 7: 5; Colossians 3: 8-11).

1. **Confession** - Begin to notice your strong emotions. When do you feel yourself getting hot, defensive, angry, withdrawn? What is motivating your emotion? What behaviour stems from your emotion? • As you attend to this internal world, ask God to make you alert to what triggers strong emotional reactions. Confess any sin relating to these reactions. • Practice noticing your internal world, and begin to develop a habit of immediate confession
2. **Detachment** - 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.
3. **Discernment** - To discern where the Holy Spirit has been recently working in your life, answer the following questions:
 - * For what am I longing?
 - * What themes keep recurring in my life?
 - * Where am I struggling?
 - * What is most life-giving to me? What is least life-giving?
4. **Mindfulness** - Keep a record of your positive and negative judgments throughout the day. What do your judgments reveal? Talk to God about what you see.
5. **Secrecy** - This week choose to do something for or give something to someone anonymously. Ask God to help you discover who you should choose. As you talk to people, pay attention to any need they might mention. Plan a way of following through on your desire without letting them know where the help or gift came from. • Talk to God about what this is like for you.
6. **Silence** - Go into silence, placing yourself in the presence of God with the words "Here I am." • As distractions come to mind, let them go by imagining they are boats floating down a river. Let the current take the distractions away. Don't follow the distractions. Gently return to God repeating "Here I am." Let the current of God's Spirit carry you. • What is this like for you?
7. **Sobriety** - Consider what soft addictions you rely on to get through the week. Let them go for a season and turn to God instead.
8. **Solitude** - Make the time you spend in the shower each morning your alone time with God. Present yourself to your Creator— all of your body, all of the dirt that has accumulated in your soul, all that God has made you to be. Let the water from the shower remind you of the water of life that nourishes and changes you. Let the warmth touch you with love. If you like a cold shower, let the bracing impact call you to live your life to the full. Offer yourself to God for the day. Thank him for the alone time he spends with you.
9. **Spiritual Direction** - A spiritual director might ask you to attend to the activity of God in your life through the following exercise. (If this sort of exercise is beneficial to you, consider speaking about your experience with someone you know who listens well to God.) Draw a lifeline and divide it into

seven-year segments. In each segment put the initials of a person you trusted. What kind of people have you trusted? • How has this affected you? How has it affected your view of the trustworthiness of God? • Who do you trust right now?

10. **Waiting** - When you end up waiting, practice letting go of your need to control. What happens? Notice what comes up while you wait and talk to God about it. You can use the time that is given— or you can waste it in fretting.

Francis de Sales writes in his Treatise on the Love of God, “No one can perfectly love God unless he gives up his affections for perishable things. . . . Our free will is never so free as when it is a slave to God’s will, just as it is never so servile as when it serves our own will.”

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



Gaza – You Can Send Aid

We heard last Sunday from Erica Henley of the partnership between Operation Hope, and the UK registered charity “Refugee Biryani and Bananas”. This partnership is delivering much needed food aid to families in Gaza.

Each family size box of non-perishable food costs \$60

Each semi-trailer costs \$60,000

Each semi-trailer carries 1,080 food boxes

Please help us reach more malnourished children and their families.

To donate safely use this link: <https://tinyurl.com/46vjatan>

You can also support the Gaza appeal by purchasing beautiful handmade gifts:

<https://operationhopeaustralia.square.site/s/shop>

Did you purchase these hand-made gifts from Operation Hope last Sunday?

They were found in the hall after morning tea.

Please find them on the table in the foyer.

Similar gifts can be purchased from Operation Hope using the link above.



The following reflection was shared recently by Common Grace, a movement of people pursuing Jesus and justice:

What a Friend We Have Jesus

We know from the Bible that God is close to the broken-hearted... but it is the stories my elders tell which have brought this truth to life for me.

Stories of growing up on missions and reserves where everything in your life is controlled and you have no self-determination.

Stories of trauma and loss, because thousands like my own grandmother were taken from country as part of the stolen generations.

Stories of such devastating discrimination that I personally can't even comprehend it.

And yet... through it all, it is God who has granted my people the peace and strength to keep going.

What a friend we have in Jesus.

Working in this space there is always a temptation to harden my heart. There are times when the sadness consumes me.

Children as young as 10 locked away in prison cells... growing numbers of Aboriginal deaths in custody... shorter lifespans, lower levels of education and lower rates employment, despite years of government policies attempting to redress the balance.

But these statistics, these stories, while real and very important... are also very negative. And even when you are working to help right these injustices you can easily become overwhelmed when you focus on the negative.

That's why shifting the narrative on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice is something I'm really passionate about.

In reality... my people's experience is far greater than their struggle or pain.

It is a 200-year long story of resilience and courage. Lived by an ancient people who have so much wisdom and value to offer because of it.

So, if you ever feel overwhelmed by injustice, remember the great strength and resilience of my elders as I do. Think of how, in the midst of their heartache, they chose to fix their eyes, not on their pain, but on Jesus.

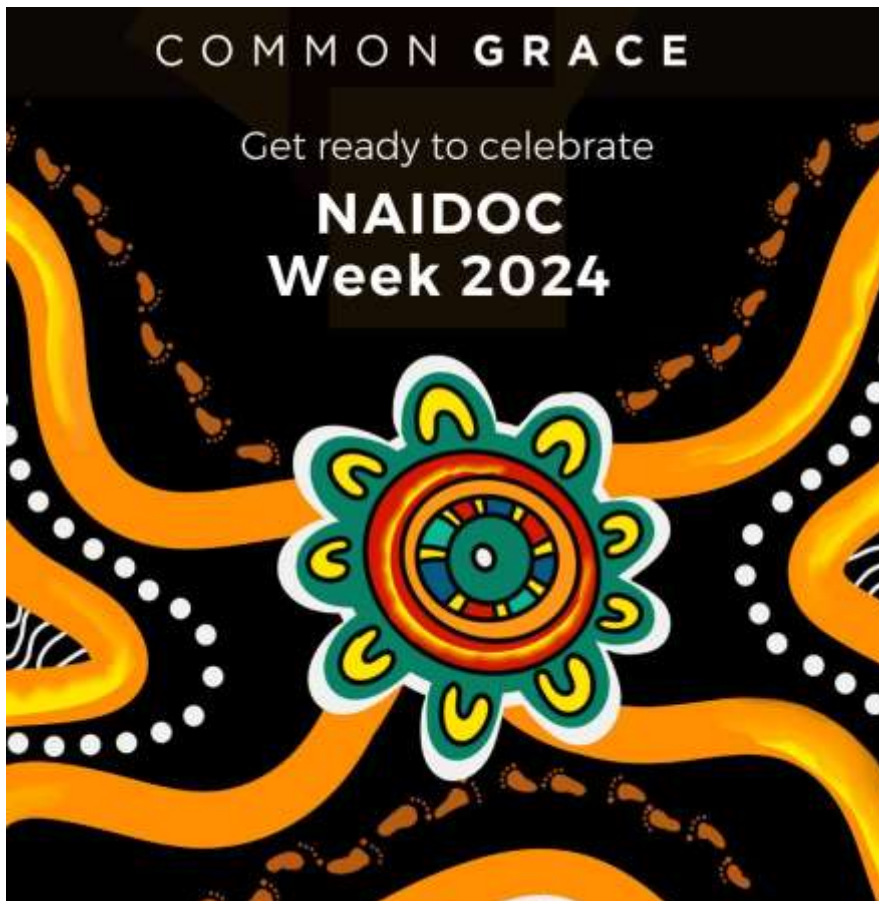
And choose to do the same.

*What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry
Everything to God in prayer!
What peace we often forfeit
O what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer
Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer
Can we find a friend so faithful
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer.*

Blessings,

Bianca Manning

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Coordinator, Common Grace



The beautiful artwork used for our 2024 NAIDOC Week graphics were designed by Artist Safina Stewart, proud Wuthithi and Mabuia Island woman.

This year's NAIDOC Week theme of 'Keep the Fire Burning: Blak, Loud and Proud' points us to the important opportunity to reflect on the strength of First Nations leadership and ways we can all be involved in keeping the fire burning for justice, truth and hope. It also "celebrates the unyielding spirit of our communities and invites all to stand in solidarity, amplifying the voices that have long been silenced." [NAIDOC Week Committee](#)

As we approach 2024 NAIDOC Week celebrations in this post-Voice referendum year we hold to the call in Hebrews 10:23-25 to consider how we can spur one another onto love and good deeds in our communities.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Hebrews 10: 23-25

We are inspired by the resilience and tenacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Their encouragement to not give up, to engage, and join their efforts to bring urgent change through justice, truth-telling, treaty and genuine relationship. Non-Indigenous Australians can support by showing up, by listening, learning, and amplifying First Nations voices - this is how we add logs to the fire. **May we take actions together to keep the flame of justice, truth and hope burning so all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, now and into the future, are safe, free and flourishing.**

Report on the mission named Neos, June 2024

Neos began in January 2023.

Initially the work began in two specific areas.

1. The Hunter Community Alliance. Tom is part of the HCA Steering Committee which includes monthly meetings, and involves tasks like relational meetings, council meetings, training days, and preparation for forums (in 2023 the State election candidates forums). In the process, Tom met with local Catholic and Anglican priests, attended a meeting with the Glenrock Anglican Church Council (to discuss their membership in the HCA), and met with several members of the local community who belong to organisations which are member organisations in the HCA. So, this involvement meant Tom participating in actions that bring real benefit to the community, connecting with other organisations that share concerns for the community in common with the Uniting Church, meeting with and getting to know local political leaders and developing one-on-one relationships with members of the community beyond the congregation. Along the way, Tom has had numerous spiritual conversations encouraging people to reflect on their spiritual motivations for their active roles in the community (including a conversation with State Member for Charlestown Jodie Harrison about her involvement in the Salvation Army and that involvement being the inspiration for her involvement in social justice action).
2. Learning about the local community. This involved visiting a number of organisations, and businesses. This included meeting with the manager of "The Place". It also involved walking around Charlestown Square, the Charlestown Shopping Centre, the business district and surrounding residential area. A primary discovery was the lack of public space (somewhere people can meet without having to buy something ... like coffee). The Council had a plan for the local business district for public comment. Tom prepared a submission concerned about the lack of public space. This resulted in some revisions and future proposals in the plan. Consideration of the issue of public space led to the discovery of the concept of placemaking. Simply, this is the creation of a place where people love to be. What this might be is as variable as the imagination of the people involved. The area Tom had in mind was the space at Hilltop Plaza. Tom visited all the business owners, and met with community engagement personnel from the Lake Macquarie council. He was able to establish consensus support for developing a lunch time program in the Hill Top plaza public area, however then it was fenced off because of the need from significant repairs as a result of construction failures in a recent redevelopment.

More recent developments

Tom enrolled in a Synod led mission leadership course which was led by Karina Kreminski. The course taught about social analysis of the local community, engagement with the community, spiritual practices involving embedding in, and learning about the community. This included more information about placemaking. Tom decided to follow the former course up with training in placemaking doing an online course developed in Tasmania. Tom then learned about the Greater Charlestown Alliance Sustainability Neighbourhood Group. He attended one of their meetings and talked about the concept of placemaking. They agreed to make placemaking one of their projects. Tom has also sought assistance from the Lake Macquarie Council, by way of Councillor David Belcher, to organise an information night on placemaking. This will be an initiation of the Charlestown Alliance SNG. He now also has a small team assisting with this project.

So now Tom's work is equally spread across the Hunter Community Alliance involvement and the Charlestown Alliance SNG group. Participating in these groups are his primary connection with the wider community. Through that involvement he is developing relationships with people who

are passionate about their community. Tom is always including his spiritual motivations as to why he is engaged in the various groups and roles he places. This gives the people around him an awareness of the foundational aspects of the Christian faith that cause Christians to be deeply concerned for the community in which they live. Tom also creates space for people to reflect on their own spiritual sensibilities and deep longings. Often those longings are linked with previous connection with the Christian Church.

As Karina Kreminski says, this is a slow work, and just how this might lead to future expressions of the Christian faith is not yet possible to see. However, it breaks the message of the faithful from the self-limiting context of Sunday Worship. It also connects the message of faith with the practical expression of love in the context of the local community, and this is well witnessed by people who have little or no association with the church.

Some of our Church Contacts:

Minister

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Administration:

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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>