



CONTACT

Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

25 December 2022



From Rev Tom

I wonder if you would try something this Christmas!

You could say there are many stages in our relationship with God. Those stages include, no awareness of God at all. Another stage is a knowledge of the existence of God but ignoring any potential relationship that might be available. Further along is a place where many of us Christians find ourselves. That stage is, we are aware of God as an entity to whom we can relate, talk to (pray), and who guides the way we live. Our experience of God in this sense is “third person” – you, or thou! Beyond this there is still another stage of relationship. This stage is where we realise that God is not external to us to whom relate. Rather, we are in God, and God is in us. Our experience of God is “first person” – I. Jesus says, “I and the Father are one! (John 10:30). Paul says, “your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:3b). One of the words central to the Christmas story is “Emmanuel”, God with us. So, a reflection on the nature of “God with us” is pertinent, or further, how we might reflect on how we practice “God with us”? It is this last, putting our religious ideas into practice, that is key. There is meaning to be drawn from Mary and the virgin birth. God, born in me! There is some spontaneous igniting of the presence of God. And rather than God being outside of us, God is within us, and we birth God into the world. So how might we live that in practice? Well, if I only ever experience God as external to me then the goodness of God is going to be tied to how things are going for me. If I am feeling great, and I am surrounded by loving and supportive family and friends, I might have a sense of God all around me. However, what if that is not the case. What if there is no garden of Eden for me this Christmas. Then I can be trapped into thinking that God is distant, or in some sense of being in a bad relationship with God. But what if I give all my understanding to the idea that God is in me! That God is my essence! God is in me and I am in God! What if I realise that the presence of God begins in and from me? Well, it doesn’t matter the circumstances. I might be entirely alone this Christmas, I might be physically unwell. My family might be fighting the whole time. But if God is me, in me, born from me, then my external circumstances lose their power to influence my experience of God. My external circumstances lose their power to determine how I experience the surrounding circumstances. The reason is that I am the source of love. All that I desire, all that I need, all that I crave as a human being flows out from me! So, what that means is that on Christmas morning, when I wake up, I make myself conscious that love is in me, and today is flowing from me. Whether, when I walk into the rest of the house it is empty, or there is a house full of family, I note that the people I see I see with love, see from love. They might be smiling, or someone (adult or child) throwing a tantrum. I might wake with pain in my body, but I realise the eternal part of myself that is untouched by pain directs love to the me of my body, and pain. Today, this Christmas day, I am living out the meaning of Christmas to its fullest – Emmanuel. Today God is not third person, but first person. I am hoping that you will experience the unlocking of the real power that is within you. You stop judging the world that is outside of you, and do what Jesus did – love it. Then the whole day becomes the opportunity to be and do what God is and does, “Is love and gives love”. I have to say, doing this doesn’t happen by accident. You have to be conscious in doing this. You have to consciously be doing this. It is to be at a higher level of being awake, about which Jesus kept on telling parables – stay awake. It is also the metanoia – go beyond the mind, and live from the heart. The heart is the place from which God is born into the world, from you. If, for even short periods, you give yourself to doing this during the day, you will realise the truth in your own heart, “Emmanuel!” “God with Us!” Remember though, you won’t be experience God as third person! You will have this strange awareness simply of love, love flowing from you, God in first person.

DIARY

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

Tuesday 17 January

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

Thursday 19 January

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

Sunday 22 January – Epiphany 3

9.00am Worship Service – Leader Beryl Gaul, Preacher TBA

Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1, 4-9; 1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

Tuesday 23 January

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

Thursday 25 January

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

Sunday 29 January – Epiphany 4

9.00am Closing Worship service at **Whitebridge Uniting Church**

Leader & Preacher – Rev Tom Stuart

Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Tuesday 31 January

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

Thursday 2 February

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



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

I want to share a story & photos of our beautiful girl Hayley (you will see why I say 'our girl' soon).

Hayley came long to Whitebridge Playcentre with her mum Karen when she was around 2 years old, right from the start Karen & Hayley fitted in with our playcentre team & families, both bubbly, happy, fun loving people & Hayley never arrived of us. Living locally in Whitebridge Laraine, David, Margaret & 'Freda' Janice Russell for the story 😊. Not playcentre Karen & Hayley became Hayley eager for all the craft & Karen often step in & help on craft.



or left without a cuddle for all they often ran into our team, who is Freda you ask, just ask long after starting at regulars at our Messy Church, a trusted friend who would

In 2015 we said goodbye to Hayley from Playcentre, though we still saw them at Messy Church. Hayley attended Charlestown East Primary School where I do SRE Assemblies, so I still saw Hayley at these as well & over the years she became a part of my drama kids when acting out stories or a Bible reader. I was also privileged to be invited to many of Hayley's Presentation days & to this year's CEPS School Concert where Hayley was the compare for the whole event & did a fantastic job.

Throughout her primary school life Hayley came along to Holiday Kids rarely missing one & Karen became a valued member of our team helping in craft or in the kitchen.

Last week Hayley said goodbye to Primary School as she prepares for life at High School, which also means she has finished Holiday Kid's, or is she, of course not, Hayley is keen to be a junior helper at our Holiday Kids Club next year & I am all looking forward to having her enthusiasm, drama abilities & beautiful smile being part of our team.

Congratulations Hayley on all you have achieved throughout primary school & I just know you will shine in High School.



Wishing all our congregation families & friends a Blessed Christmas & thank you for your prayers & support throughout 2022.



Cathy

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.



Wonderful News Just In!!

Eric and Enid Hancock's granddaughter, Shay, has had a beautiful baby daughter delivered last night – Payton Lee Davies.

Ian Hancock, Eric and Enid's son, is the lucky grandfather and you will remember that he lost his wife Lee earlier this year.

We send them our love and congratulations at this special time and keep them all in our thoughts and prayers.

It's a
Girl!



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



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

Special Service of Closure

At

Whitebridge Uniting Church

Sunday 29 January at 9.00am

The service will not be live streamed, but will be recorded for viewing a few days afterwards.

Please pass on an invitation to attend to anyone who has had a connection with Whitebridge.

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

Update Notes from Church Council Chairperson

As noted a couple of weeks ago, we have received a \$10,000 grant from Presbytery to conduct a property study on the Charlestown and Garden Suburb properties. The purpose of the study is to provide information on the possible uses and income earning potential of both properties in order to make a decision about how we can most effectively allocate our resources to support our Neos Mission, as well as continue the life of our present congregation.

Alfred Santos at Uniting Property has negotiated with a Property Advisory Company on our behalf. This company has provided a proposal on the scope of work which the Church Council has accepted. Work on the study will commence in the latter part of January.

Anne Threlfo

**MERRY
Christmas**

**THE LORD
IS COME!**

WISHING YOU
EVERY BLESSING
THIS FESTIVE
SEASON!



Thank you everyone for another great year!!

It is always lovely to see you, speak with you on the phone or get emails letting me know your news.

Have a wonderful and Blessed Christmas and many good wishes for 2023.

Jenny

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:

P: 4943 4019

E: office@charlestown.unitingchurch.org.au

24 Milson Street, Charlestown NSW 2290

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>