



# CONTACT



Charlestown & Garden Suburb Uniting  
Church Multi-Centre Congregation

24 December 2023

## From Rev Tom

Some time ago I read Cynthia Bourgeault's "Wisdom Jesus". Those who have heard my sermons over the years have heard me quote from her and from this book many times. Today I refer to when she says this: "I remember being struck many years ago by an insight from the contemporary mystic Bernadette Roberts that crucifixion wasn't really the hard thing for Jesus; the hard thing was incarnation. Crucifixion and what followed from it— his death and resurrection— were simply the pathway along which infinite consciousness could return to its natural state. What was really hard for infinite consciousness was to come into the finite world in the first place. With nothing to gain from the human adventure— nothing to prove, nothing to achieve, and a dangerously unboundaried heart that left him defenseless against the hard edges of this world— Jesus came anyway: that, claims Bernadette Roberts, was the real crucifixion!" This bit of Cynthia's writing came back to me when I saw a video of the pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem telling how this year they had cancelled Christmas. This church is in the West Bank! This is a Palestinian Church. This is a Palestinian pastor telling the story of pulling husbands, mothers, and children from the rubble of bombed buildings. He said that instead of celebrating Christmas they have filled the sanctuary of their church with the rubble of a home destroyed in the war. Amid the rubble, they placed the form of a baby. This baby represents all the babies that have been pulled from the rubble in Gaza. But this figure also represents the baby Jesus. For the Christians of Palestine, it is the child in the rubble that becomes the symbol of "God with us"! Cynthia Bourgeault, in her book, goes on to say, "There is definitely something spiritually counterintuitive about this business of incarnation, and to really get what's at stake in this mystery is for me the acid test as to whether you understand what Christianity is all about." This is indeed the test for us! And it is the way to receive the hope, peace, joy, and love of Christ in all circumstances. It is to realise the truth of this powerful image in the desperation of the plight of their people. "For God so loved the world" that God is truly present in ways that are beyond our imaginations, our comprehension, and beyond our understanding of what it really means for each of us, that the Christ is the child in the rubble. It is in that place that God wholly unites eternity with the fragility of our physicality. Perhaps, in your efforts this Christmas to prepare for the coming of Jesus, you could just give yourself a little space right now to simply sit with the image of Jesus, the Christ, the baby in the rubble. Don't try to think it. It is too much for you, and if it is not too much for you is because you haven't got it. No, let this be a spiritual saturation that is of principalities and powers that are in you, God doing the transforming work in you that you cannot know, but maybe you will experience the fruits. Jesus is the baby in the rubble!



# DIARY

## **Thursday 21 December**

10.00am Morning tea in the Community - common seated area opposite Butcher at Charlestown Sq

## **Sunday 24 December – Advent 4**

9.00am Worship Service – Leader: Michael Smith and  
The message will be brought by the Moderator of the Uniting  
Church in NSW/ACT, Rev Faaimata (Mata) Havea Hiliau  
*2 Samuel 7:1-11,16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-27; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38*



## **Sunday 24 December – Christmas Eve at Garden Suburb Church** **Christmas Family Service**

*Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96: Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-20*

## **Monday 25 December – Christmas Day**

9.00am Worship Service Leader and Preacher Rev'd Tom  
**The Communion of Christmas**  
*Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Hebrews 1: 1-12; John 1:1-14*



## **Tuesday 26 December**

[No Morning Tea at Lake Square this day](#)

## **Thursday 28 December**

10.00am Morning tea in the Community - common seated area opposite Butcher at  
Charlestown Square

## **Sunday 31 December – Christmas 1**

9.00am Worship Service – Leader and Preacher Rev'd Tom  
*Isaiah 61:10 - 62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40*

## **Monday 1 January**

10.00am Garden Suburb Aged Care Facility Pastoral Visitation

## **Tuesday 2 January**

10.00am Morning tea in the Community at Lake Macquarie Square

## **Thursday 4 January**

10.00am Morning tea in the Community - common seated area opposite Butcher at  
Charlestown Square

## **Sunday 7 January - The Baptism of Jesus**

9.00 am Worship Service - Leader & Preacher – Rev'd Tom  
*Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11*

## **Friday 12 January**

6.00pm Ladies Night at Kahibah

## **Sunday 14 January – Epiphany 2**

9.00 am Worship Service including Holy Baptism of Logan Peter William Smithies  
Leader & Preacher – Rev'd Tom  
*1 Samuel 3:1-10; Psalm 139:1-11; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51*

# THE PRAYER PAGE



Pray that the Australian Church can model today, the example of the early Christians, in making space for all people to flourish in community.

## Pastoral Prayer Points

- \* Fred Bryant in hospital
- \* Daniel Stuart
- \* Family and friends of Glenda O'Donahue
- \* June Locker
- \* Family and friends of Tom and Kathy
- \* Ryan Walpole in rehabilitation
- \* Kathryn Gray
- \* those suffering with Covid
- \* Those in our Congregation who have lost loved ones in recent months
- \* Anne
- \* Mac
- \* Jacqueline Fenwick
- \* Peter Ferguson
- \* Nola in hospital
- \* Isabella
- \* Ashley
- \* Janice Wright
- \* Eileen Dunn
- \* Mert
- \* Judith and family
- \* Lorraine Pepper
- \* Enid Power
- \* Fred Bryant
- \* Max

Maintained by SFED and Enid Power

## Congregational Prayer Points

- Church Council
- Project Reconnect
- Worship Services
- Cathy Beeton and SRE classes
- Worship Committee

## Wider Community Prayer Points

- those affected by climate change in Australia eg droughts and fires
- Tom and NEOS as he follows ideas and opportunities including with Wesley Mission at Windsor, Hunter Community Alliance, Greater Charlestown Sustainability Group
- Hunter Community Alliance's arrangements towards the Founding Assembly in April 2024 , as approaches are made to encourage politicians to attend and give support to local initiatives to reduce emissions
- The situation in Israel and Gaza
- The victims and families of the earthquake in Afghanistan
- Consequences of climate change around the world
- The situation in Ukraine and other trouble spots
- Fabian, Wilfreda and children as Kenya experiences floods





## OFFICE CLOSED

The Office will be closed on the  
27 December 2023  
3 January 2024  
17 January 2024

There will be a Contact completed on the 10 January 2024 so if you have any Group start dates or news please get them to me before the 10<sup>th</sup>.

## Share God's love through the Christmas Bowl



Thank you for joining with churches across Australia as we share God's love through the Christmas Bowl.

Since 1949, the Christmas Bowl has brought together committed Australian Christians with dedicated local partners around the world to give hope to people uprooted by conflict and disaster. By sharing this tradition, you are helping build a world where all people have a safe place to belong. **Thank you.**



CALL: 1800 025 101 VISIT: [christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au](https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au)

The Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. ABN 86 619 970 188

If giving to the Christmas Bowl is part of your Christmas traditions, envelopes to put in the offering are available on the entry cupboard or you can make an online donation at

<https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/donate>

# Whisper of God Retreat Day



Discerning your gifts for passionate living



An opportunity to explore spiritual practice and reflection, to give space to hear the gentle whisper of God and the creative and curious work of the Holy Spirit in and through us. Listen to what God is calling you to in the year ahead and explore how you might experience fullness of life, purpose and joy. Led by Rev Greer Hudson, Period of Discernment Co-ordinator for the Synod of NSW and ACT, supporting people to explore, articulate and celebrate their gifts in mission and ministry. Greer is a trained InterPlay leader, a labyrinth and retreat facilitator, a dancer, a storyteller, and a mother. Greer is passionate about embodied spirituality – about how we might experience God through more than words.

**Saturday 17th February 2024**

**10am - 4pm \$20/15 conc.**

**Adamstown Uniting Church - Bruncker Rd Adamstown**

Bring lunch or purchase nearby

Bookings here: [Whisper of God Retreat Day Tickets](#)

The Hunter Presbytery Uniting Church in Australia

Tickets here: <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/whisper-of-god-retreat-day-tickets-741824776877?aff=oddtcreator>



## NAME BADGES

**Do you require a name badge?**

**I will be placing an order in January, so let me know if you would like one.**

**Also advise if you would prefer the clip/pin or magnet type (remembering that you shouldn't use the magnet if you have a pacemaker).**

**Email or leave a message on the office phone.**

### **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>