

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA YASS PARISH



MAY 2020

MINISTER:	Rev David Stuart	0408 400 542 6226 1132 Manse
revdavidstuart@gmail.com		
CHAIRMAN	Sue Demoor	All may be contacted through Contacts on this website. Use the dropdown menu to find the person you need.
SECRETARY:	Ruth Thompson	
TREASURER:	Lesley Cox	
NEWSLETTER EDITOR:	Lee Parker	

As part of God's people we are called by God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to share the love and grace of Jesus Christ, within our community through regular worship, faithful witness and humble service.

Minister's Message:

The current situation we find ourselves in is very different to things we have experienced before. As I write this, we have been living under COVID-19 imposed restrictions for about six weeks. Among other things, it has meant we have been unable to meet together for worship in the same physical space. While it has brought certain challenges, it has also provided us with opportunities we may not have had if things kept going in the way they always had. For instance, we have been able to livestream our worship services. They are different to what we had six weeks ago, yet it is worship, and it is now available to more people. It is something new which is exciting, yet it also brings questions.

In Exodus 14:10-25 we read about the Israelites who were in the midst of moving toward something new, wondering if it is the right way forward, and looking behind thinking it might be best to just go back to how things were. They had been released from captivity in Egypt and they were running from Pharaoh, heading towards the Red Sea. It was a challenging time as they were breaking free from the past and moving toward something new and different.

They were not sure where they were headed or how long it would take, so there was uncertainty, confusion and they were scared. At one point the comment was made that they might as well go back to Egypt and be under their rule, probably because it was easier to be in the past where it was not good, but at least they knew what to expect. Yet Moses spoke to the people and said "Do not be afraid, stand firm in the Lord" (Exodus 14:13) Just after this God opened a way through the Red Sea and the Israelites moved forward together.

In time, the restrictions we are currently living under will lift and we will again be able to meet together in the same place for worship. This is going to be exciting, but I wonder if things will ever really be the same? It will be easy, and perhaps very tempting to go back to how things were, to replicate what has been done in the past, back to what we have known. However, while it is a challenging, confusing and perhaps scary time, there is also a sense that something new is coming and things we never thought possible will be opened up. What these are and what Church will look like we may not be able to see, but we go forward in the knowledge that God is with us and guiding us through the Spirit.

Please know I am praying for you at this time, that you may know the love and presence of God in your life.

Grace and Peace

David

From the Chair of Church Council

It has been truly an interesting and sometimes a bit scary month. So much has happened since our last Council meeting in February, but many of us have been on a high learning curve trying to support the church during this time.

We realised that we were in a disaster management cycle even before we were informed of this by Synod. We were reluctant, but quick to close church buildings when we feared for the safety of our parishners. We moved into new media of Facebook, blogs, and improved the use of our website.

Facebook services

Our Facebook ministry by David (and with a big help from Gillian) has reached even more people than our face to face services have done in the past. In some cases we have had up to 300 people viewing these videos. We need to think about what this means for the future. You don't need to logon on the Facebook to view these videos or even be a part of the live services but if you do, you can add comments which are helping to keep us all more connected (finding out about birthdays, anniversaries and much more).

You can join the services live at 9am on Sundays or view the recorded videos any time later at our Facebook site (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Christian-Church/Yass-Uniting-Church-228378387525290/>)

Meetings

Most of our meetings have been and will be conducted by Zoom which allows users to see and hear each other, which certainly is better than just an audio meeting. We are also using Zoom for informal coffee hour after the church service at about 10am on Sundays. You can attend this by following the link provided in the comments on the Facebook site.

Zoom is free for users attending meetings and for some meetings it is just a web link to click. You can add the Zoom app to your tablet or phone, or download and install zoom on your computer. It will be hard to see everyone on your phone. If you need help getting this going, contact Sue or David. You will be sent an invitation link for a meeting. Just click it and join.

Newsletters

Lee is continuing to edit newsletters and would appreciate content, I'm sure. Newsletters will continue to be emailed to those of you who get them this way, and will be sent by mail to those requesting them, and from April 2020 are on our church website (<https://yass.uca.org.au/newsletters-2020/>).

Blog

Our blog, <https://yassparish.blogspot.com/>, doesn't appear to have been used much, but will be an option for those leading worship without the use of Facebook.

Offerings and Finances

Lesley is closely monitoring our financial situation and has been proactive in looking at options, including Job Keeper and ATO Boost. Our expenses have not changed much over this period, but offerings have gone down. It would be wonderful if you could continue your giving at the same level or at the level you are able. Remember, there is an online banking option and you can save up and go to your bank to deposit or save your funds and deposit in the offering when we return to worship together. You can deposit straight into our Westpac account with this information:

UCA – Yass Parish Account

BSB number: **634 634** Account number: **100039947**
with the reference **Offering Yass** or **Offering Rye Park**

You can also use this account information to deposit through internet banking. Your gift will be really appreciated.

Information from Synod

Synod has sent us their Guiding principles of the Crisis Management Support Framework, which are:

1. Ensure adequate crisis management governance.
2. Maintain the continuity of core and priority ministry, ministries and livelihoods.
3. Demonstrate good stewardship of resources (people, property and financial) for the long-term sustainability of the Uniting Church and the community it serves.
4. Position the whole Church for growth and strength, both during and beyond the current crisis.
5. Reinforce targeted support based on assessment of vulnerability and missional priority.
6. Demonstrate a compassionate and pastoral response for those who may be adversely impacted.

Useful links

I found Dr Stephen Robinson's, our UCA Disaster Recovery Officer, video, Principles of Emergency Ministry. (<https://vimeo.com/400816564>) very informative.

Simon, our Moderators's blog (<https://talbragar.net/about/>) is always interesting, and his video message at (<https://vimeo.com/399026424>) reminds us that it is time to build relationships. Don't shrink into your own world. Jesus has breathed the Holy Spirit into us and sent us on our way.

We would love to hear from you about any suggestions, help you need or are willing to offer
God bless, Sue Demoor, Chair, Yass Parish

Useful Church Links

Parish website: <https://yass.uca.org.au/>

Parish Facebook site: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Christian-Church/Yass-Uniting-Church-228378387525290/>

Parish Blog: <https://yassparish.blogspot.com/>

RYE PARK CONGREGATION

Not just a Church, but a Family.



Well little did we know at the beginning of this year that within a very short space of time, we would be living so differently. We pray that everyone is adapting and counting our blessings, that we live in such a great part of this wonderful country. Yes, it is hard but it is also an opportunity.

Thank you, David & Gillian, for the services you have organised & the involvement of your children.

Harvest festival was held on March 14th with a reasonable role up. Given the long drawn out drought produce may have been down a little but as usual the community rallied as the auction went ahead with a spirit of competitive fun. There was a profit of approximately

\$2000. This was followed by a meal and a wonderful time of fellowship was enjoyed by those attending with no-one in a hurry to leave.

Easter Services as with everything else were cancelled. This is the first sunrise Easter Sunday service to be cancelled in the 30 years we have been holding it outside. We have had frost on our toes, wind in our hair, torches in the dark with daylight saving, clouds & brilliant sunrises but never cancelled. Our Easter banner was still displayed outside the church acknowledging the celebration of our Risen Lord.

Tree removal - The Canary Island Pine in the church ground, which had become an imminent risk has been removed and the ground levelled. We thank Chris Beck & his team for their professionalism & skill in removing this huge tree that had been put in the too hard basket for many years.

We are missing - Lillian Giles who has returned to her winter home in QLD after six months with her family here. Her wise council is always welcome & in particular during our bible studies. Her quiet but determined spirit & biblical knowledge gives us much to contemplate.

Rosters- With no rosters I'm sure we have all filled in the time somehow. I know many now have personal phone rosters & what blessing that has been for so many. It is so easy in our busy lives to put off contact with others & yet to hear the appreciation of those who feel at times, a little forgotten, is a reminder of how much the simple things can mean. May we continue to appreciate the simple things & the blessings they bring.

In this time of change let us remember those who are facing extra hardships & keep them in our prayers. Those we know who are experiencing uncertainty in their everyday lives: illness, procedures, operations or cancelled operations, family grief & our elderly who are extra venerable & facing this time without the face-to-face support of the familiar visitors & routines.

April -Birthdays: 20th ... Sheree Bush
- Anniversary: 21st ... Kelvin & Joan George
May – Birthdays: 5th ... Lorraine Mayhew
6th ... Lillian Giles
7th ... Ron Veness
24th ... Garry Southwell

MAY LECTIONARY READINGS:

DATE	DAY	FIRST READING	PSALM	SECOND READING	GOSPEL
3	Easter 4	Acts 2: 42-47	Ps 23	1 Pt 2: 19-25	Jn 10: 1-10
10	Easter 5	Acts 7: 55-60	Ps 31: 1-5, 15-16	1 Pt 2: 2-10	Jn 14: 1-14
17	Easter 6	Acts 17: 22-31	Ps 66: 8-20	1 Pt 3: 13-22	Jn 14: 15-21
24	Easter 7	Acts 1: 6-14	Ps 68: 1-10, 32-35	1 Pt 4: 12-14, 5: 6-11	JN 17: 1-11
31	Day of Pentecost	Acts 2: 1-21 or Num 11: 24-30	Ps 104: 24-34, 35b	1 Cor 12: 3b-13 or Acts 2: 1-21	Jn 20: 19-23 or Jn 7: 37-39

Second Sunday of Easter A Word to Thomas and to You and Me

In this Easter season with the post resurrection experience behind the disciples, Jesus' followers and us, St John in today's Gospel (St John 20: 19-31) offers us a valuable insight in answering the opening question. As it was with the disciples on these two post resurrection times behind closed doors, so it is with you and me for we are people of the post resurrection experience for we are people of faith in a Risen Lord.

So, how do you and I see Jesus speaking to us? Importantly, again as with the disciples, how does he speak to our fears and searching in our faith life? Here the words of Jesus are vitally important and try to imagine hearing them as Jesus spoke them – "*peace be with you!*" Twice these are his words to the Eleven and if we wish – they are his words to us, "*peace be with you!*" Gentle, gentle words - for "*peace*" is a word of gentleness (one of the fruits of the Spirit Jesus lived and gives to us through that same Spirit.)

As Jesus meets firstly with ten of his disciples and then with the Eleven, now that Thomas is back with them, there are no words of castigation such as: "where were you on Friday?" "I noticed you were absent at the Cross, why?" "why weren't you with Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea when they laid me in the tomb"? "why are you behind closed doors?"

No, no words of annoyance, judgement, frustrated disappointment, but listen and imagine you are hearing his words – "*peace be with you!*"

For Thomas there are no words of reproach, no reprimand, no, as we say, putting down of him in front of the Ten.

Very significantly, Jesus' words to Thomas are a gentle invitation – touch here, touch there, hold the faith by believing me.

Thomas' response, imagine it and hear it, is a personal confession and affirmation – "*My Lord and my God!*" Note that the New English Bible translation has an exclamation mark, the mark of the emphatic statement. Note also that Thomas' statement is MY not our and it embodies commitment. So the searching Thomas is both honoured by Jesus and together with his disciple brothers receives the blessing that follows, and imagine yourself

hearing it – *“Because you have seen me you have found faith.
Happy are they who never saw me and yet have found faith.”*

With all that behind, what about you and me?

Rather than asking a question, a statement will be better. We can state and share with Jesus, as did Thomas, our searching for assurance and faith on our journey that is going to be enriched by Jesus’ blessings as Jesus blessed his disciples in that closed room and more so when they ventured into the open for and with him.

We, like Thomas, will have Jesus addressing us with his personal invitation. He will speak to you differently from me and from our sisters and brothers in him.

His invitation will be to reach out, touch, hold to faith and to see how God has been at work in and through you and me.

Reflect, recall how each of us have heard Jesus speaking to us. And joyfully using us as blessing to others in the multitude of ways our efforts in service and ministries serve and honour him.

John’s Gospel records Thomas’ initial response, but does not go on to record the further responses of Thomas and his brother disciples. The Acts of the Apostles and Epistles and the pages of Church History since the resurrection record them and that history of Christ’s body the Church is still being written today and tomorrow.

But we can recall our responses, well if not all, then at least some of them.

Our response is to keep following and walking with Jesus keeping ourselves open to hear his voice and his words. Both in times of uncertainty, the dark nights of faith when we wonder if it is all worth it, and in the times of being on a well-lit path – listen, be alert, expect to hear Jesus’ word *“Peace be with you!”*

Then like Thomas and the Ten, set about throwing open the closed doors and getting out among God’s people and create, devise and initiate ways to share the blessings we have and are receiving and that in Jesus’ name we, like those first disciples and followers, are invited and commissioned to share.

A Prayer:

Dear God,
Speak gently in my silence.
When the loud outer noises of my surroundings and the loud inner noises of my fears
keep pulling me away from you,
help me to trust that you are still there even when I am unable to hear you.
Give me ears to listen to your small, soft voice saying: "Come to me, you who are
overburdened, and I will give you rest....
for I am gentle and humble of heart."
Let that loving voice be my guide. Amen

Question for meditation: Why do I avoid silence?

From Henri J.M. Nouwen "With Open Hands"

AGM OF THE YASS CONGREGATION:

The AGM has been postponed until further notice. (*Christine Anderson - Congregation Secretary*)

A little light:

See this little light of mine, I have to let it shine,
Not so that others hear me say, "the best one is always mine"...
But it's because I'm worried that its brightness will decline –
So it's mine, and by design I let it shine.

Can this little light of mine, encourage yours to shine?
Where's your achievement, gift or skill that's worthy of a sign?
Even the small successes which are hardest to define –
Shout 'They're mine!' – so, that's fine, let them shine.

See these little lights that shine – your, and theirs and mine?
Look at the brightness that's around when every light can shine...
Banishing darkness, chasing fears, as lives are redesigned....
Love divine? Unconfined? Let it shine!

(*Tom Gordon 'Welcoming each wonder'; Wild Goose Publications 2010*)

Penny & Tony Jigsaw library

The Bickfords have quite an extensive collection of jigsaw puzzles and thought others might enjoy borrowing them and solving them. I am calling this the Penny & Tony Jigsaw library. If you are interested in doing one, let me know. I have some of these puzzles, a "branch" of the library, in my sitting room as shown in the picture below. Just email me through Contacts on this website. Use the dropdown menu to find my name or ring.



ANZAC Day 2020: The following are included for those who would like to commemorate Anzac Day.

Prayer of Remembrance:

We remember those who served defending freedom, their bravery and dedication, their patriotism and humour, their resourcefulness and hope.

We remember sailors, soldiers and airmen, and all who suffered. In times of quietness, some of us remember the sounds of battlefields, the hopelessness of defeat and the poverty of captivity.

We remember those buried in foreign soil and those who returned home, some forever changed.

We remember sons and daughters, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers who served in time of war and those who waited – some in vain.

Lord, we honour them, we are grateful to them. They gave us the freedom that we enjoy today. We should never underestimate the cost of that freedom nor take it for granted.

We give thanks that those who serve in our Defence Forces today are, like their forefathers, willing to protect us and our heritage.

May we be as grateful to them as we are to those whose memory we honour today. Amen.

The ODE:

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,

We will remember them! Lest We Forget!