

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA YASS PARISH



AUGUST 2020

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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:

Dear Church Family in Yass and Rye Park,

Here we are in the middle of July 2020. Just over half the year has gone, yet when we think about what we have experienced in these six months, it feels like we have lived through a whole year. So many things have changed and the big question is will we ever get back to "normal". Of course, the follow-up question to this is 'what is "normal"?' Being the year 2020, at the beginning of the year I challenged the Church Council to look ahead with 20/20 vision and focus on where God might be calling us. Little did we know that we would be where we are now. Throughout the restrictions, changes in what we do and how we do it, we have adapted and pivoted to move with the changes. It has not been easy, but we have learned new things and it is exciting to think where we might be headed and to what God might be calling us. Over the past weeks I have been thinking, praying and teaching about the call of God, using the example of Moses and the Israelites. Moses heard the call of God as he tended to his father-in-law's sheep. He moved through the wilderness, coming to a place beyond the wilderness to the place of God. It was here that God spoke to Moses, called him, and shared the call and plan with him. Moses then had to make a decision about how he would respond. As we move ahead in the story, Moses goes before Pharaoh and demands that he let the Israelites go. After a time of suffering, Pharaoh gives up, allowing the Israelites to go. They are now free and they move out to a new life, a new way of doing things, a new call of God on their life. It is an exciting, yet confusing time as they find that following the call of God is not always easy, and there are many things to consider and work through. However, they also learn that when they stop, wait on God and look at things differently, they see God at work in ways they could not imagine. They discover that when God calls and we choose to follow, God makes a way.

I share these reflections about the call of God because God has called us at this time. He has called us as a church to move ahead in new ways of doing things, to see that worship, gather and care for each other in different ways. God has shown us that the good news of love and grace can be shared with others in new and exciting ways. God has called us a church to stop,

wait and see things differently, in order to see God at work, leading, guiding and strengthening us.

I also share the images and words of call, because God has called me to a new ministry opportunity. I too have had to stop, wait and see things differently in my own life and ministry. The congregation of Keiraview Uniting Church in West Wollongong has extended a call to me to begin ministry within the congregation from 1 January 2021, which I have accepted. It has not been an easy decision for Gillian and I to make as we have many reasons to stay here. Gillian has her work at Yass Public School, we have our new house, the children love it in Yass, and we have great friends here. It is also difficult leaving the congregations of Yass and Rye Park. While we could easily stay, we do feel that God is calling us to this new place and ministry. My ministry here has been very blessed and we have experienced such care, support and love in many different ways. I have been able to learn and grow not only in ministry and my spiritual gifts, but I have also grown as person. Being my first placement, the Yass Parish will always hold a very deep place in my heart. I will forever be grateful for being able to minister with you, share stories and life experiences, to laugh and cry with you, to serve you and to be served.

I am sorry to share this in a letter and not in person in a worship service, or over a coffee, however current restrictions have limited the possibility of this. I hope you understand. At this stage, I plan to take Annual Leave owing, intending to finish up at the end of November 2020. My final service and closure of ministry will be worked out in the coming months.

Thank you for all your love and support for me and my family over the years. May God continue to bless you richly as you follow God's call as a church and in your own lives.
Grace and Peace David

The adult version of 'Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes is

'Glasses, Wallet, Keys and Phone!'

RYE PARK CONGREGATION August 2020



Not just a Church, but a Family.

THERE'S PEACE AND CALM IN THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

With THE LORD as "YOUR SHEPHERD"
you have all that you need,
For, if you "FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS"
wherever HE may lead,
HE will guard and guide and keep you
in HIS loving, watchful care
And ,when travelling in "dark valleys,"

“ YOUR SHEPHERD “ will be there
 HIS goodness is unfailing,
 HIS kindness knows no end,
 For the LORD is a “GOOD SHEPHERD”
 on whom you can depend....
 So, when your heart is troubled,
 you’ll find quite, peace and calm
 If you’ll open up the Bible
 and read the 23rd Psalm.

ZUCCHINI AND SWEET CORN SOUP

Place 3 zucchinis chopped with 3 to 4 cups chicken stock and simmer for 15 mins. While cooking cook up a small onion and some bacon pieces. When all cooked put all together, add salt and pepper 310 g can creamed corn and half a can low-fat evaporated milk. Serve with some crusty bread. ENJOY

AUGUST LECTIONARY READINGS:

DATE	DAY	FIRST READING	PSALM	SECOND READING	GOSPEL
2	Pent 9	Gn 32: 22-31	Ps 17: 1-7, 15	Rom 9: 1-5	Mt 14: 13-21
9	Pent 10	Gn 37: 1-4,12-28	Ps 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45b	Rom 10: 5-15	Mt 14: 22-33
16	Pent 11	Gn 45: 1-15	Ps 133	Rom 11: 1-2a, 29-32	Mt 15: (10-20), 21-28
23	Pent 12	Ex 1: 8 – 2:10	Ps 124	Rom 12: 1-8	Mt 16: 13-20
30	Pent 13	Ex 3: 1-15	Ps 105:1-6, 23-26, 45b	Rom 12: 9-21	Mt 16: 21-28

Death Notice:

Max BUSH: Max passed away at Ulladulla NSW, on July 12th, after a long illness. Max would have been well known to many members of the Yass and Rye Park Congregations. He retired to the South Coast from Yass 20 years ago. Max, who was 92, is survived by his children Stephen and Fiona and their families and his sisters Betty Gruber and Barbara Lawton, both of whom are well known to many of us. Our thoughts are with Betty and Barbara as they remember a loved brother. (Editor)

Reflection: A Psalming Influence.

I could do a quick trivia quiz on the Book of Psalms but I decided to limit it to two questions. They are:

How many psalms are there in the bible? Answer: 150.

Did David write all of them? Answer: No, he wrote 73 of the 150. There are a further two credited to him and referred to in the books of Romans and Hebrews.

In my Presbyterian years we sang a psalm every week as part of the worship service. One of the challenges as an organist was to find a tune that the people could sing the psalm to. We have moved or strayed away from that in recent years – more’s the pity I feel (and I am guilty of being one of the causes of that, playing ‘easier’ hymns).

The Book of Psalms is a unique book within our bible. There are well known psalms such as psalm 23, 100, 121, and others.

The Psalms convey three important themes of Hebrew Scripture 1) that God is active in history, 2) the necessity of human response to God through praise and prayer, 3) the beginning of wisdom is to Trust in God and fear of the Lord.

So, what should we be reflecting on? Well, think on this:

1) The book of Psalms expresses worship. Throughout its many pages, Psalms encourages its readers to praise God for who He is and what He has done.

2) The Psalms illuminate the greatness of our God, affirms His faithfulness to us in times of trouble, and remind us of the absolute centrality of His Word. As the Psalms present a clear picture of God lovingly guiding His people, the responses of praise and worship to God are never far from the psalmists’ pens.

3) The portrayal of worship in the Psalms offers us glimpse after glimpse of hearts devoted to God, individuals repentant before Him, and lives changed through encounters with Him. The Book of Psalms gives us a ready-made treasure chest of devotional resources. Perhaps it is time for all of us to revisit this storehouse of spiritual strength, support and encouragement and use it to assist us on our daily journey through life. (GMP)

A look at the lighter side:

There is a mysterious crime spree going on at the Canberra IKEA. The police are having a hard time putting together the pieces...

Want to hear a chimney joke? Got stacks of them. The first one’s on the house....

I’m convinced that highlighters are the pens of the future. Mark my words.....

I told my suitcases that there will be no holidays this year. Now I’m dealing with emotional baggage.

Reflection: How Is It with Your Soul?

I meet regularly with a few friends and we ask one another an important question. We ask, “How is it with your soul?” In other words, at the core of your being ... what is going on? We ask the question every time we meet for lunch because we have promised to “watch over one another in love.”

How is it with your soul? That is a vital question. With other people I may ask, “How are you doing?” “How is everything going?” Or, “What’s happening?” But when I’m with these four men, we try to be as honest as we can and tell each other what is really going on. How is it with your soul? It's a bigger question than, "How are you feeling?" It includes body, mind, spirit, relationships -- everything.

I love that question. It reminds me to check in with myself from time to time. And I appreciate that there are a few other people that really want to know.

So let me ask you -- how is it with your soul? And how would you answer these related questions?

1. Do you take time to FEED your soul?

Human beings need nourishment beyond the physical. I'm told that a hummingbird flaps its wings some 50-80 times a second. It must eat constantly to work that hard. It takes tremendous energy simply to live. We, too, must feed our minds and spirits as well as our bodies if we intend to be fully healthy. It may include prayer or meditation or the practice of other spiritual disciplines. Or taking classes and reading uplifting books. Or contacting an old friend. Without constant nourishment, our bodies, minds, spirits and even our relationships will grow weak and listless.

2. Do you REST your soul?

In our multi-tasking lives, sometimes the best thing we can do is to do nothing. I occasionally like nothing better than sitting quietly, listening to soft music and letting my soul be at peace. Charles Darwin said, "If I had my life to live over again, I would have made a rule to read some poetry and listen to some music at least once a week." What rests your soul?

3. How do you CHEER your soul?

One of the greatest gifts you have been given is a gift of laughter. And it is a gift we can never use enough. My own experience is that when I feel down, disheartened and discouraged, the cause is not because of too much suffering; it is because of too little joy. Where I find joy, I find life.

So, how did you do with those questions? This may be a good time to check in with yourself. Make sure you ask the big question: how it is with your soul? Then listen carefully. Your soul may have something significant to tell you. *(Steve Goodier)*

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September Newsletter Items:

Please ensure that the **Editor has items** for the September issue **by Wednesday, 26 August.**

Sowing and Trusting (*6th Sunday in Pentecost*).

Our gospel reading this week is one of the most well-known parables – the Parable of the Sower.

The parables of Jesus embody much of his fundamental teachings. They are simple, memorable stories, often with humble imagery, each with a single message. Some though, were surprising and paradoxical. The parable of the Good Samaritan, for example, turned expectations on their head with the despised Samaritan proving to be the wounded man's neighbour, but in today's parable of the sower there are four scenarios. Three of the four have seemingly negative overtones or outcomes. One has a positive outcome.

The positive outcome also has scenarios: One hundredfold, one sixty-fold and one thirty-fold. The three differing returns suggest that there were differing soil qualities into which the seeds were scattered. The best soil produced the best results. Lesser soils produced lesser results. The lesser or ordinary soil could be boosted by fertilizer. The average can be turned to better than average.

We heard about a farmer who went out to sow seed. The farmer seemed careless, sowing seed along the path where birds would eat it up, on rocky places where the plants would sprout quickly but with shallow roots that the sun would scorch. Other seed is scattered among thorns that would outgrow the plants and choke them out—a lot of seed going into all these places as well as its intended destination, amongst the good soil.

He doesn't think much about getting the maximum yield from his field. He is, in reality, depending on a miracle for any kind of harvest at all.

Today's farmers don't depend on miracles. They plan ahead, ploughing, irrigating, and fertilizing--minimizing waste by sowing with precision, recognizing that minimizing waste means maximizing profit.

But Jesus admires this less economical farmer, and he interprets his parable far away from the crowds so that only the disciples hear his explanation. These disciples, who, in a way, are like sowers, sowing the Good News of the Kingdom of God. To those who would soon be entrusted with spreading the Gospel to all the earth, Jesus offers a parable about a farmer who sows seed and leaves the rest up to God.

Today's farmers do their best to control everything that they can. They try and maximize the soil's fertility, adding in supplements and doing their best not to leave too much of the process up to chance or up to God.

Today, when we seem to be successful, the temptation is to take credit for a job well done; and when we seem to struggle, we assume we have done something wrong, we haven't planned enough.

We want to maximize our yields, minimize our waste, and with the opportunity to control more and more - to know more and more, we run the risk of forgetting that ours is a vital, but ultimately a small part of the great miracle God has been doing in our world since the dawn of creation.

Our seed must be sown or there will never be a crop, but by no means is the harvest all up to us. We must sow the seeds, but we must also trust that what will grow will grow and what doesn't, is out of our control.

Our world is changing, and I believe that many of you, like me, are worried about the future of our Church.

We are worried about the world we are living in. A world that, seemingly to many Christians, is a culture of drugs and greed, filling young men and women with apathy, cynicism--eating up seeds of hope and truth like the birds eating up the seeds sown along the path.

We are worried about the soil--that too many in our communities are unresponsive to the Gospel, as hardened to the church as the rocky places that have no use for seeds of faith.

We are worried about the shallow faith of others. We worry about what will come of what seems to be a shallow faith or a lonely faith. We are worried about those who are spiritual but not religious. When the sun comes up, will their belief be scorched and wither into nothing?

We are worried about the "thorns" of our world--worrying about what forces will take over to strangle humanity should the faithful fade away. A world left to ambition, the reckless pursuit of wealth with no regard for the common good. We worry about the prospect that surely without the Church, too many will be left to the thorns that grow up and choke first the poor, the oppressed, then all of us.

But Jesus doesn't call our attention to the seed that is lost. "Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop--a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Let anyone with ears listen!"

Jesus entrusted twelve people with the future of the church, twelve people who launched a campaign that changed the whole world. A positive, super-charged start that scattered the seeds of the Good News of Jesus far and wide.

They sowed seeds of love, caring, trust, faith. They went to places where they were confronted with rocky grounds of disbelief. They went to places where they experienced instant germinations of faith but witnessed that initial growth flag under the opposition of non-believers or alternative life styles. They went to places that started strong but faded when the going got tough. They went to places where the seed grew on strong foundations and endured the buffering and battering of opposing authorities, traditions, practises and rulers.

Our modern-day church needs to reflect on the message of the Parable of the Sower. It appears that more and more, either having experienced rejection or just fearing it, we are reluctant to reach out to people in love though we so desperately want to--as though our hands are cold despite our warm hearts.

We are reluctant to reach out in love, to cast seeds of hope, to invite friends to worship in our communities of faith.

We are reluctant, as though we already know how our offer will be received, though the only thing that guarantees the rejection of what we have to offer is keeping the seed in our hand, never casting it out into the world.

Rather than cast concerned eyes on our world wondering where all the good Christians have moved off to, the parable of the sower calls us to trust that we are not the Lord of the harvest--that the state of our communities, like the state of the sower's soil, is not ours to worry over.

Rather than worry over members lost, the parable of the sower calls us all to sow seeds of love, grace and mercy over new ground—not to worry over where it will land but to be concerned only with casting as much seed as possible--leaving all the rest up to God.

The parable of the sower demands that we sow seed and keep on sowing. Our challenge is keep it simple, not to complicate matters any more than that--just sow seeds of love, seeds of care, seeds of understanding, seeds of compassion, seeds of hope and leave the rest up to God.

Leave the rest up to God? Doing just that, is, in itself, a challenge. A challenge for our own faith, our own trust in God. The challenge to keep on sowing, not looking for instant results but trusting in God to use the seeds we have sown.

And when there are good results, be it hundred fold, sixtyfold or even thirty fold there is no room from spiritually snobbery in the church of Jesus Christ. We are to celebrate with the thirty fold harvest as much as we rejoice with the hundred fold.

For that matter, we equally celebrate with those whose Gospel yield comes in at a modest threefold. And we should go wild with joy when the footpath or the rocky and weedy places produce an occasional positive result.

The parable of the Sower reminds us, reaffirms to us that our God is committed to an ongoing commitment to sow the seed, to spread it far and wide. We are part of the sowing process. We have the seeds that can be sown in the hearts and minds of those around us. Those we live with, those we go to work with, those we go to school with, those we live beside. We are the ones who plough the fields and scatter the good seed on the land.

The God of Jesus is determined to maintain a free broadcast policy, spreading the seed of the Gospel among the thistles, on the footpaths, or among the rocks. No adverse conditions are so extreme that he will throw up his hand and say: "Not here. This soil is hopeless."

Jesus will do anything; go the second mile, turn the other cheek, forgive seventy times seven, suffer abuse and betrayal- rather than turn back from his policy of sowing and broadcasting the seed of the Gospel in favourable conditions or in inhospitable ones.

No cost is too much for this Man from Nazareth and his God. Even if the soil has to be watered and fed with his own body and blood, he willingly will do so. The Divine commitment is absolute. Our commitment should be absolute.

There is a world out there that needs to be sown with seed, some of it hard pathways, some of it rocky slopes or thorny groves. Jesus inspired his disciples and followers to sow the seeds and he is still calling on us to do the same. We are sowers! Amen.

