



Welcome.

Glen Waverley Uniting Church is a faithful, Christ-centered community that meets God and shares in that unconditional love.

Ministerial Musings

Pastor Di Paterson



Here we are in Advent with only a few weeks to go until Christmas. It astounds me every year that Christmas seems to start earlier and earlier. The decorations, the buy while things are on special, be prepared for Christmas, make sure there is just the right gift under the Christmas tree! The list goes on and on. Then of course there is the what to cook, where to eat and do we have enough space to have the family around? Christmas is a frantic time, a time when we hope everything will be just right that nothing will ruin the day for us or our family. We all have expectations that Christmas will be a wonderful time like it usually is, and we all aim for that. I remember many years ago, my daughter came down with measles just before Christmas, so there was no Christmas dinner with the family. She felt a little better so we went to the in-laws in the evening as she was so upset to be missing Christmas. That year I missed the family holiday because as one child recovered the next one got sick, so it was an odd Christmas. But then, so was the first Christmas.

A mother expecting a baby, she and her husband travelling to Bethlehem for the census, no room in the Inn, only a shed out the back with the animals and the smells. Yes, it was not perfect but it was indeed a night of wonders and miracles. Angels singing praises, shepherds racing to Bethlehem to worship the child, the whole of creation seemed to join in the celebration, why even the stars seemed to shine brighter.

As we reflect on that first Christmas, it is to be hoped that the busyness of Christmas does not get in the way of the wonder of this time of celebration. We have done Christmas so often with its expectations and the need to do the traditions and the dinner with all the trimmings. But I wonder if this year, we might just stop, and think and marvel at the amazing gift that happened on that first Christmas. Can we be wide eyed like a child, excited by celebrating the birthday of Jesus? Can we feel the thrill of the shepherds and celebrate with the Angels? Jesus is indeed the reason for the Season, let's sing with joy, "Come and join the Celebration, it's a very special day, come and share our jubilation, there's a new King born today," and that's the Wonder of Christmas!

The Wonder of
CHRISTMAS

What's On...

January 2023
- 10am Combined
Service each Sunday
(+live broadcast)

From February 2023, our usual services & events are:

- 8am **Contemplative**
- 9.15am **Interactive (+live broadcast)** incl. Holy Communion - 1st Sunday of each month
- 11am **Traditional (+live broadcast)** incl. Holy Communion - 3rd Sunday of each month
- 2pm **Indonesian Fellowship on Zoom**
- 5pm **Creative Worship**

MONDAY

- 10.00am **GOMERS**
- 10.00am **Playgroup**
- 10.00am **Craft Group**
- 2.00pm **Leisure Time**
- 8.00pm **Badminton**

TUESDAY

- 10.00am **The Hub**
- 10.00am **Playgroup**
- 2.00pm **Mindful Meditation**
- 4.00pm **Meditation Online**
- 7.30pm **Bible Study**

WEDNESDAY

- 7.30am **Prayer Time Online**
- 8.00pm **Free Spirit**

THURSDAY

- 11.00am **English Conversation Class**
- 7.00pm **Monthly Reflection Online**

FRIDAY

- 9.30am **Choir of Hope**
- 5.30pm/7.00pm **Uthies/Youth**

Please note: not all events are held each week - please contact the church office for details.

GWUC Westpac Bank Account

Uniting Church Glen Waverley
 BSB: 033 052
 Account Number: 92 2198



Christmas Traditions from Around the World

Austria - home of the most popular Christmas carol in the world, *Stille Nacht* (Silent Night)

China - get together with family and friends and give apples wrapped in colourful cellophane

Colombia - Noche de las Velitas (Night of the Little Candles)

Croatia - growing of Christmas wheat which is placed under the tree

Denmark - dance around the Christmas tree while singing carols

El Salvador - toast Christmas with fireworks displays

Ethiopia - people dress in white

Europe - decorating fir trees

France - official national seasonal dessert should be the *bûche de Noël* (the Yule log)

Germany - hanging Advent Calendars

Greece - the locals don't just decorate Christmas trees, but also Christmas boats

Hungary - *Jézuska*, baby Jesus, brings the presents

India - Streets are adorned with garlands of giant paper lanterns in the shape of stars

Indonesia - The churches usually feature Christmas Drama. There is also Choir, Dance.

Ireland - tall red candle in a front window overnight, a welcoming symbol of warmth and shelter

Italy - setting up a nativity scene

Malaysia - giving out money in red packets or Ang Paus

Martinique - families visit their neighbors during Advent and on New Year's Day bearing holiday food

Mexico - gifting poinsettia

Netherlands - Sinterklaas (St. Nicholas) brings them their presents

Norway - making a gingerbread house, and eating *risengrynsgrøt* (hot rice pudding)

Philippines - hanging of *parols*, a star-shaped lantern made of bamboo and coloured paper in the streets

Poland - Polish baked *piernik*, the typical yummy gingerbread

Portugal - Christmas bonfire lit before Christmas Eve mass

Québec - celebrate Christmas the night before (Réveillon)

Rome - midnight mass

Singapore - attend Christmas service in commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

South Africa - a traditional dessert which includes apricot jam, served hot with custard and ice cream.

Sweden - procession made up of young girls and boys, in white gowns and holding candle lights

Switzerland - Swiss families make their own advent calendars

Syria - gifts are delivered by a camel, being (according to tradition) the youngest camel of the Three Kings in the Bible

Ukraine - dressing in traditional garments and walking through town singing carols

Venezuela, Caracas - people dust off their skates and travel through the city to gather together at an early-morning Christmas service

Vietnam - raucous Christmas celebrations, carols and families recreating the nativity play

Kingsway Magazine is a regular magazine of Glen Waverley Uniting Church. It is designed to provide a voice for the church community to share activities, thoughts, celebrations, stories and the faith journey, and will present to the church community the quiet achievers and achievements in the life of our church. "Kingsway" has a multi-generational, multi-cultural and missional focus and is designed to build community, lift the spirit and strengthen our faith. If you have an item, article or notice that you think will be just right for "Kingsway", please contact Joanne Boldiston (office@gwuc.org.au) or David Fraser (davidfraser60@gmail.com).

Christmas in the Summer

Christmas Eve was a night of excitement during our youth in South Korea. On the snowy and cold midnight, young people visited the congregants' homes and sang Christmas carols, wishing God's blessing on them—"Silent night ~ holy night~." The congregants offered us hot drinks and a mixture of gifts, which were brought to the church and boxed for the Sunday school kids. We thought Christmas in the winter was the "right" kind of Christmas. Moving to Australia, we had some difficulty getting used to Christmas in the summer. So awkward to hear:

"Dashing through the bush in a rusty Holden ute. Kicking up the dust, esky in the boot. Kelpie by my side, singing Christmas songs, It's summer time and I am in my singlet, shorts and thongs. Oh"

We finally accepted Christmas in the summer as a "right" kind of Christmas, too! Now, this is the preferred way! However, it is clear Christmas in any season is possible, and Christmas has nothing to do with the season. Christmas is "season-proof." The love of God has been displayed through His incarnation as a little helpless baby boy. Through Jesus, we are given true hope!

— Amy and Gilbert Han



The Wonder of CHRISTMAS

Special Christmas Services:

18 December - 10am Living Nativity

24 December - Christmas Eve

7pm All-Age Worship

11pm Coffee & Carols

25 December - Christmas Day

8.30am & 10am Worship

31 December | 11pm New Year's Eve Worship

Services in January - 10am each Sunday

Join us in person this Christmas
or online at www.gwuc.org.au/live

Wishing
you all a
Merry
Christmas
and a
Happy
New Year

Childhood memories of Christmas

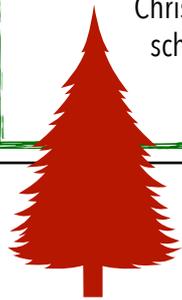
My Christmas memories from an early age go back to Warrnambool where I lived with my mother and two older brothers. Many Christmas Days were spent in Portland with an uncle and aunt. On our annual car trip of 60 miles there was always great excitement leading up to coming over the crest of a hill from where we could see if a ship was in port.

We always went to the Christmas Day service at the Warrnambool Methodist Church. The Sunday school classes would practice on Sunday afternoons for weeks to present a play based on the Christmas story. We even had an elocution teacher to help with our pronunciation. After church we went home to a special dinner of chicken with fizzy drinks. This was the only time of the year we enjoyed these luxuries.

In the lead up to Christmas a musical group from the Salvation Army would gather on our street corner to sing carols. I don't remember having a Christmas tree, but presents were placed in a pillow slip hung over the back of a chair or at the end of the bed. Gifts mainly consisted of wind-up cars or trains, board games, puzzles, balsa wood to make up model planes and books.

The nearest thing to anything electronic was a crystal set radio but nothing required a battery to make it work. One Christmas I did get a secondhand bike but that was out of necessity as it was the only way I could get to secondary school.

– Eric Armstrong



Reflections of a Grumpy Grinch

One of my colleagues once remarked to me "John, you will always love Christmas, because you love the music so much".

He was wrong.

If there is one thing I cannot abide (apart from fields around Bethlehem), it is the carol "Joy to the World". We sing it every Christmas, but I don't always include myself in that. I often refrain from singing both the verses and refrain - you know, the bit that goes "And Heaven and nature sing ...".

Well, Heaven and nature can sing it all they like, but I'm not that natural (and certainly not that heavenly!) Even the music tells us not to. It starts with a descending scale, and its mood just goes lower and lower, into the depths that only Grumpy Old Men would know.

Why so Grumpy? Apart from the fact that it is done to death every Christmas - one gets assailed with it at every tinsel-covered outlet, every ho-ho-ho booth, and everywhere there is a quick buck to be made. I just hate the commercialisation of Christmas, and the insincerity that goes with the fact that it is not the joy of giving, it is the joy of making money that lights up the heart of the commercial world.

Jesus spotted this insincerity, and was always ready to call it out. "No man can serve two masters" he pointed out, and the incipient greed that goes with the modern day Christmas would move him to tears.

However. There is a sincere side to Christmas, and we should all know what that is. It is love, the force field that binds us

together when we are open to the message that Jesus brings. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

Love is an amazing thing. It costs nothing, but can cost everything. It can be the hardest thing to do, and yet the easiest thing to do. Jesus knew that message more than anyone. How else could He have said on the cross, when suffering the agonising pains of crucifixion, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"? The sheer effrontery of the notion that a tiny baby could become such a symbol, nay not a symbol, but a fountain of love and forgiveness, just leaves me speechless. "Love thine enemy" is so outrageous a concept, so logic defying, so emotionally contradictory, that we struggle not only to understand it, but also to apply it.

And here also is the contradiction of Christmas. Yes, we are assailed by crass commercialism, greed and exploitation at Christmas time, but is that not just a reflection of our own weaknesses throughout the year? We may embark upon all sorts of altruistic resolutions at the start of a new year, but at Christmas time we do need reminding of the force of love. And love brings with it the promise of forgiveness, and the hope of participating in the here and now of the Divine Presence, the integrity of living out the truth, and the communion of souls. AKA, the Kingdom of God.

Maybe I might revisit "Joy to the World"? What do you think?

– John Hurst

How I spent Christmas

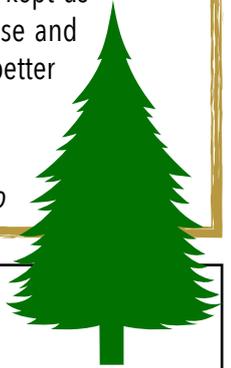
...when I was a child growing up in Jakarta & Singapore? The family celebration was similar in that my parents were strict in making sure church services came before opening presents.

Whilst we were in Jakarta, Christmas started on the 24th. In the morning we would put the decorations on our Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was put up a week before and it remained bare until the morning of the 24th. We all put our favourite decorations on before dad put the lights and other trimmings on. My parents brought out our presents and put them under the tree. As kids, we had to have a nap in the afternoon. This was followed by dinner before dad left for church as he had to prepare for the service. My uncle picked us up later and we would go to church for the 10pm Christmas Eve service. After the service we would open our presents. Christmas Day service was at 10am so we had to go to sleep immediately.

When I was 10 years old, we moved to Singapore. Like everyone else we knew, our Christmas tree was up 2 weeks before Christmas and fully decorated. On Christmas Eve we had an early dinner as we would all go carolling with other church members. We visited old folk's homes, childrens' homes, childrens' hospitals and members' homes. We travelled in 2 buses and divided the venues between us. We met back at the church by 11pm and supper would be waiting for us, followed by a Christmas Eve service at midnight. After the service, we got to open our presents and the excitement would kept us awake as we were due in church for the 8am Christmas Day service. When we got home, we would collapse and spend the rest of our Christmas Day in bed. This happened every year until we became teenagers and found better things to do on Christmas Day than sleep. Boxing Day became our sleeping day.

I do miss the carolling and the fellowship we enjoyed in the bus whilst travelling...

– Vida Foo



"After Jesus before Christianity" is a brilliant book that we have been following in our Friday Heretics group. It looks at the time immediately after the crucifixion during earliest stages of the development which resulted in the Christian church. One thing that becomes very obvious is that we do not really understand the brutality of life under the Roman rule. One very early writer said that the Romans butchered, pillaged, raped and decimated every country they occupied in the name of "Pax Romani" (Roman peace). To look at it in modern terms it was like the occupied countries during the second world war. Such was the Roman Empire.

Looking back to the original Greek in which the gospels were written the word for Empire is the same as Kingdom. Jesus is quoted as saying "the Kingdom (Empire) of God is at hand", three times in Matthew, once in Mark and three times in Luke (one he says is with you). The Kingdom of God of which he speaks is not the afterlife or some far off realm, it is here and now and we can make it even in the oppression of such an evil empire as the Roman Empire. We can make the Kingdom of God now in how we live with each other, showing compassion and forgiveness and love (agape not eros) to each other.

After the crucifixion there were twelve apostles and many more followers of Jesus, and it appears that each went different ways but the New Testament really only follows Peter and Paul with a little from James the brother of Jesus. The rest don't get a

mention other than to be listed at the beginning of Acts when they selected a replacement for Judas Iscariot. In reality these apostles and followers would go out to form numerous Jesus clubs, schools, associations and home gatherings which spread across the Mediterranean, legend had it that Thomas went to India and founded groups there. These groups grew and spread the teachings of Jesus and celebrated the Eucharist, sometimes suffering severe persecution. The Romans were amazed at the love early followers of Jesus had for each other. Unfortunately, with the rise of the "Orthodoxy" in the second century, the writings from these groups were often classed as heresy because it disagreed with the early church fathers. As a result most of their writings were destroyed. But in gathering and learning of the message of Jesus they found an inner strength and contentment within the groups and in spite of the Romans they experience the "Kingdom of God" within themselves.

Much has been made of salvation for the afterlife but the message of Jesus is for here and now. We are incredibly fortunate to live in a stable community, it isn't perfect but we live without the threat of missiles from oppressive neighbours or extremists trying to force their beliefs on us. As we approach Christmas to celebrate the birth of Jesus we need to think back on his teachings and how we can experience and help bring the "Kingdom of God" on earth.

– Bill Norquay on behalf of the Friday Heretics group.

CATCHING UP WITH THE TRAINEE MINISTERS IN MANADO, NORTH SULAWESI

In November Lucky Kalonta and Glyn Howells were able to spend time with many of the trainee ministers with whom we have an on-going program of sharing faith in English on zoom.

Here is Natalia's story:

This is a story about my family

I live with a family that is not rich in wealth, but loves each other. I have an older brother who is kind and loves me. When I grew up, I saw a big change happening in my family. My older brother got married while I was studying at Theological university. He has a beautiful daughter.

Later, I often received reports over the phone that he liked to get drunk and make a mess. I didn't like it.

One day, I came home. At night he partied with his friends until he was drunk. He screamed in the streets like a madman, like a man who doesn't know God. I was scared; I cried.

My mom kept getting in the way of it. At that time, dad was attending worship outside. I was really scared and wanted to run away from it, but I also didn't want to leave my nephew and mom.

Afterwards things started to stabilise, started to calm down; I kept praying all night long, so that it wouldn't happen again. A few months later when we felt safe, the dreaded thing happened again. He was always influenced by the liquor he drank.

This has been a terrible trauma for me. I was afraid every night. Even though I am far from them, I always think of my family in the village. I was afraid that it would happen again and traumatise my nephew. Mom and dad are also getting old. I am afraid they will feel uncomfortable; they will feel sad every night.

I always pray, asking God for recovery for my brother. I also thought, how will I become a servant of God, a preacher for the people, while in my family there are things that need to be improved. I prayed to God to guide me.

At this time, I no longer hear about my brother's bad nature, but there is something new that scares me. My mother is in a bad condition: she is sick and has to be operated on. My worries are increasing; I am afraid something will happen. But I'm grateful that our family is starting to get back together again.

I don't hear any more about my brother being messed up. I feel like God is good, God hears my prayers. And dealing with my sick mother, I also hope and believe that God will reveal His power and goodness.

I always pray that God will protect my family.



Altry, Risca, Astika, Gloria, Keysia, Glyn, Brigita, Meilany, Natalia, Reaven and Lucky at the Synod office of KGPM (November 2022)

Indonesian Christmas Celebration

Sunday 11 December 2022



Come along and see our 2022 Christmas Installation

W-O-N-D-E-R

from 18 December - All Welcome

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**CHRISTMAS
COLOURING
ACTIVITY**

