



REACHING OUT

Sunday March 23, 2025

9:00 am at Emmanuel Anglican and Uniting Church

Uniting tradition led by Rev. Leonie Findlay

11:15am at Kergunyah Uniting Church

Bible Readings for Sunday March 23

Lent 3

Isaiah 55: 1-9; Psalm 63:1-8; 1 Corinthians 10: 1-13; Luke 13: 1-9

Repent or Perish

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.'

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree



Then he told this parable: 'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, "See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?" He replied, "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig round it and put manure on it. If it

bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

Luke 13:1-9

Bible Readings for Sunday March 30

Lent 4

Joshua 5: 9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5: 16-21; Luke 15: 1-3, 11b-32

Praying For One Another 2025

In the Uniting Church Presbytery of North East Victoria.

Congregations in the Presbytery are called to pray for one another each time they meet. By naming each other in prayer we enhance our pastoral support with each other, in God's company. This invitation builds our faith linkages every year. This week we pray for the congregations of **Mansfield and Tolmie** beginning Sunday, March 23.

Food Relief Assistance

The Felltimber Community Centre has passed on their thanks for the food relief program of donated nonperishable food items such as pasta, rice, tinned tomatoes, any type of soup or pasta sauce. These items can be placed in the basket at the rear of the church on Sunday and will be collected each Wednesday with vegetable garden produce. This will help in some small way to assist those needing food relief.

Coming Events

Sun March 23, 2:30pm

Wed March 26, 8:30am

10:30am

Fri March 28, 9:30am

Songs of Praise at Cookinburra Church. All Welcome.

Grounds and Maintenance

Morning Tea and Fellowship

Craft group meets at Emmanuel

Emmanuel Roster

March 23

Elder on Duty: Carol Harris
Reader: Necia Searle
Prayers: Carol Harris
Early Word: LouAnne Stabb

TV Screen: Harold Cover
Usher: Harold Cover
Organist: LouAnne Stabb

March 30

Elder on Duty:
Reader: Betty Sagers
Prayers: Jenny Mathieson
Early Word:

TV Screen: Carolyn Renfrey
Usher: Carolyn Renfrey
Organist:

REPENTANCE Rev Leonie Findlay

PRAYER

O God, let your Holy Spirit bind us to you until we learn that to love you gives everything we do its meaning. This one thing is what is necessary. But since every good we possess is a gift in the first place, grant us the grace of an adoring, loving heart, that we may be in that state where we should be.

In your name

AMEN

SOME THOUGHTS

The word repent conjures images of fiery evangelists preaching from the pulpit at the 'unsaved'.

The emphasis on the benefits of repentance being freedom from the threat of everlasting punishment in hell. So, like many reared in such an environment, the goal in life was to become a 'good person'. Life became a list of what we ought to do and another list of what we ought never do. This was until the spiritual discipline of confession and the freedom from the 'tyranny of goodness' is realised. The fact is that repentance is not a onetime event but one of those lessons we learn over and over. This does not mean that we ignore dubious habits but that we are able to struggle with them and still be a person of integrity. We do not want just to avoid breaking a rule to avoid punishment. To repent is to recognise what we have done or said does not reflect the nature of God and there is a commitment to change this.

And the season of Lent is a time of repentance. It is a time of 'examen'.

Many of us have grown up in a religious environment focused on 'doing good'.

Indeed, this tyranny of having to be good, as it was defined in our religious subculture, often was a barrier to a life of prayer. Our prayers seemed inadequate as a means of relating to the Holy God.

In the story of the prodigal son, the time spent in the far country was not primarily a rebellion against the public customs or rules of his father. He was rebelling against the relationship of love offered by his father. This offer did contain expectations he did not want to face.

To be loved by God and to accept the gift of that love is to become responsible for how our life is lived out as a chosen child of God.

There is a lot more spiritual empowerment in that position for a Christian than in the position of trying to be good and following all the rules. The prodigal's life after he returned would be totally different from the life he lived before he left home or the rebellious life he lived in the far country. After experiencing his father's welcoming love, he would have to respond to this as an adult rather than as a child.

To accept a gift that God has given to us first requires a confession. Honest confession leads to a freeing of the Spirit from the tyranny of sin. Often when we are blessed with a gift from God the challenge lies in our willingness to accept the responsibility of that gift. To deny the gift and its responsibilities, is to deny the love of the giver.

SELAH

BENEDICTION



To him who loves us and freed us from our sins with his life's blood, who made us a royal house, to serve as priests of his God and father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

AMEN

Ministers of the Word & Other Contacts

UCA: Rev. Leonie Findlay
0419 990 358
lfindlay03@bigpond.com

Anglican: Fr Jacques Jefferies
02 6024 2129 or 0434 063 069
stjohnsw@bigpond.net.au
[weekly RDO: Friday]

Emmanuel Pastoral Care: speak with an Elder or Warden
Emmanuel Prayer Chain: give requests to Betty Saggars on 0427 761 044
Address: PO Box 435, Wodonga 3689
Reaching Out: Items to Harold Cover 02 6024 7929 hcover@bigpond.com
or LouAnne Stabb 0419 644 769 stabb@iinet.net.au by Wednesday.

Prayer of the Week World Council of Churches

Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania



14 June 2023, Tallinn, Estonia: People walk through the Tallinn old city, host of the 2023 CEC General Assembly which takes place on 14-20 June under the theme of: 'Under God's blessing – shaping the future'. Photo: Albin Hillert/Life on Earth

We are thankful for:

- preservation of the distinct cultural practices, literature, music and natural resources in these countries.
- the faithful witness of Christians during times of persecution and for those who survived times of occupation.
- how these countries peacefully became independent after 1918 and 1991.
- new-found freedoms that the people here have experienced, that they might be used for the good of all.

We pray for:

- peaceful relations with Russia and among all the ethnic groups in these lands.
- the healing of old wounds remaining from 20th century struggles.
- just economic development that benefits all citizens in these countries, and for those who live and work abroad.
- governmental leaders and all people, that they might together strive for justice, peace and the well-being of all.

Lenten Studies

Presbytery North East Victoria Lent Studies - Live Lent together

We thought it would be good to have some Lent studies this year. We are only doing four studies, so it is not too heavy a commitment. The studies will be run on Zoom as in the past. You can join from home or get a group together. We will break into groups (either virtual or the groups who have gathered) and look at the Lent readings from the following Sunday. The attached pamphlet gives more information. Please promote to your congregations, and we look forward to seeing you.

Tanya Walker and Scott Leslie will host a study each, and others will take some studies as well.
See poster on page 4.



Presbytery of North East Victoria
The Body of Christ from across the region, meeting to worship, pray, study, learn and do business.

Bible studies based on Lent readings
Studies offered by Zoom
Join from home or gather with others

Tuesday afternoons at 2pm
or
Wednesday evenings at 7:30
(the same study offered twice at different times)

Being Fruitful - Tuesday 18th March 2pm or Wednesday 19th March 7:30pm
Being Found - Tuesday 25th March 2pm or Wednesday 26th March 7:30pm
Being Faithful - Tuesday 1st April 2pm or Wednesday 2nd April 7:30pm
Being Fulfilled - Tuesday 8th April 2pm or Wednesday 9th April 7:30pm

Questions to Scott Leslie scottuniting@gmail.com or 0403 756 724



Like us, clouds have many moods. Really dark clouds symbolise darkness and coming rain. Some clouds signal a coming storm.

Winds come and drive the clouds away, and we have blue skies and sunshine. Spring and summer arrive according to nature's seasons.

On their journey to the Promised Land, the Israelites were protected and guided by an overreaching cloud by day and a pillar of fire at night.

God was with them all the time and all the way, on the Mount of Transfiguration. God spoke to Peter, James and John, out of a covering cloud. Jesus was transfigured before them, his clothes dazzling white and his face shining like the sun. God spoke out of the cloud and said, "This is my son, the Beloved, in whom I am well pleased, listen to him."

Sometimes clouds make us sad and gloomy, according to our moods. Yet above the clouds shine the sun, moon and the twinkling stars, taking their turn in heaven's cycle.

When the clouds are lifted and the sun shines we know all is well.

And there is more. The Psalmist put it this way:

"O Lord my God, you are very great, You are clothed with honour and majesty, wrapped in light as in a garment.

You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers." (Psalm 104:1-4).