

Diary Dates

Sun, 10 Advent Week 2 9am Worship Service, Kids & Youth Vision with Rev Chris Wright. Sausage Sizzle & M'Tea.

11:30am Korean Reborn Church service & lunch

3pm Combined Churches Choir practice at St John's

Mon, 11 4-5am Wheely Bean-JH M-F

9:30am-3pm Kairos Outside Sewing Group in Jubilee Hl

10am-4pm Op Shop Mon-Fri

11am Wilder Funeral

4pm Weight W in DH

5:30pm New V. Dance in JH

5:30pm Carols in the Corridors at TBH

Tue, 12 9-2 Church Office Open T-F

10am Pres. Bookkeeper

5pm Rainbow Cottage

Christmas Function JH

5pm Weight Watchers DH

7:30pm Church Council in the St Andrew's Room

Wed, 13 9am Op Shop Working Bee

10am Compassionate Friends in St Andrew's Rm

2pm Advent Study in St A R

6pm Compassionate Friends

Service in Church & St A R

6pm New Vogue Dance JH

7:30pm Advent Study in St Andrew's Room/Wesley Rm

Thu, 14 12:30pm Rural Home Nursing

4:30pm Church Music Team & Choir practice

Fri, 15 8:30am Weight W. DH

10am Craft group in St A R School Term Ends

Sat, 16 8am Weight Watchers DH

9am-12noon Op Shop

6pm Carols in the Park

7pm Bendemeer UC 150th

Sun, 17 Advent Week 3 9am Worship Service & Occasional Choir with Rev Chris Wright. Morning Tea. Christmas Appeal Set-up/Food Hamper

11am Rev Chris @ Hallsville for Peel Valley Service

11:30am Korean Reborn Church service & lunch

3pm Combined Churches

Choir practice at St John's

Preaching Plan



Sunday, 17 December 2017

9am Tamworth City—Rev Chris Wright E: B McLean, D: J Phillips, W Purss, W Standen, AV: J Cathew, O: R Cathcart.

9:30am Tamworth Southside—David Bissett HC

11am Hallsville—Peel Valley Church & Lunch—Rev Chris Wright

5pm Tamworth Southside—David Bissett HC



Contact Details:

- **Minister:** Rev Chris Wright Ph 0427 633 657 Email chris@thewrights.com.au
- **Office:** 144 Marius St, PO Box 501, Tamworth 2340 Ph 02 6766 5311 Fx 02 6766 4390 Email tamworthcity.uca@gmail.com Hrs 9am-2pm Tue-Fri

Other Useful Local

Contacts:

- **Southside Office:** Ph/ Fx 6765 3714 PO Box 5101, South Tamworth 2340 Email tsucoffice@aanet.com.au
- **Southside Lay Ministry Worker:** Suzanne Holloway 0438 608 373
- **Peel Valley:** Margaret Crowell Mb 0408 660 025
- **UNITING St Andrew's Village** 1800 864 846 Pastoral Care Practitioner Galina Newcombe 0417 830 662
- **UNITING Rainbow Cottage** 6766 7655 Sharn Mason

*Welcome to Tamworth City
Uniting Church*

We welcome all those worshipping with us today. Rev Chris Wright will be leading Worship with the Children and Youth Vision partners. Please stay for a chat and morning tea afterwards.



Advent Study 3

Readings

John 1:1-6; 19-28; Matthew 3:1-12

Jesus is the central figure of Christmas after all it is the celebration of His coming to be among us. In Advent, though, it's his forerunner, John the Baptist, who takes centre stage, though it's clear he has no desire to upstage Jesus. Rather, he labours to prepare the way for Jesus. John is the main character in this passage of Scripture from John's Gospel and also in Matthew's Gospel 3:1-12 that are some of the traditional readings for Advent.

Although John is the subject in each case, the two passages give us different pictures of the man. In Matthew 3, he's a firebrand, dressed in rough clothing and living on a sparse diet of locusts and wild honey, who confronts people throughout Judea. He calls them to confess their sins and repent, and he baptizes them after they do. But when some members of the two religious sects, Pharisees and Sadducees, arrive on the scene, he calls them "children of snakes." There is some doubt they came to be baptized, more likely they came to see what was going on.

Whatever the reason for their appearance at this point, John confronts them by asking rhetorically who had warned them to "escape from the angry judgment that is coming soon?" (v 7). If they have actually come to be baptized, they apparently want to skip the confession-of-sin and repentance steps, for John plainly tells them they have to start doing things that show they "have changed [their] hearts and lives" (v 8). If they have come only to inspect what John is doing, his message still applies. Either way, he punches at their self-righteousness and anticipates that they might appeal to their "chosen" status as descendants of Abraham (that is, to their being Jews, God's chosen people) to excuse them from confession and repentance. Thus, John blasts them with "and don't even think about saying to yourselves, Abraham is our father. I tell you that God is able to raise up Abraham's children from these stones" (v 9).

Then, comparing good works and righteous deeds to the "good fruit" of a tree, he tells them "every tree that doesn't produce good fruit will be chopped down and tossed into the fire" (v 10, *italics added*). The Pharisees and Sadducees surely understand he's talking about them.

Southside Scene

Worship: 9:30am & 5pm Sundays.
HC 3rd Sunday.

Ladies Breakfast: 7:30am on 4th
Tuesday each month.

Prayer Meeting: 3:30pm Tuesdays.

Worship Planning: 5:30pm Tuesdays.

Faith Art Group: 1pm Thursdays,
alternate weeks, school terms.

Men's Choir: 5:30pm on Thursdays.

Men's Breakfast: 7:30am on 1st
Saturday each month.

Christmas Eve Worship: 11:30pm

Christmas Day Worship: 8am

www.tamworthsouthside.org.au or

Facebook: *Tamworth Southside
Uniting Church*

Our Vision: *To be a faithful & enthusiastic
part of God's church in our community,
sharing the love of Jesus.*



Peel Valley Congregations

Sun, 10 Dec—11am West Tamworth
Service with Margaret Crowell.

Fri, 15 Dec—6pm Hallsville Friday
Family Church—Carol Service with
Margaret Crowell.

Sun, 17 Dec—11am Peel Valley
Congregational Worship at Hallsville
with Rev Chris Wright. Lunch to
follow.

Sun, 24 Dec—11am West Tamworth
Christmas Eve Service with Meg
Mangan.

Mon, 25 Dec—9am Hallsville
Christmas Day Worship.

Note: Peel Valley Congregations in
recess from 31 December until 21
January for 7am Hallsville Gospel
Breakfast. All welcome.

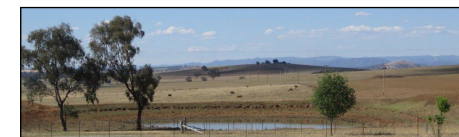
GOWRIE, HALLSVILLE & WEST TAMWORTH CONGREGATIONS

*Our Goal "To be transformed communities,
experiencing, enjoying & sharing the gift of
the friendship of Jesus."*

Mission "Called to be Free, Gifted to Serve"

Pastoral Care: Meg Mangan 0466 337 005

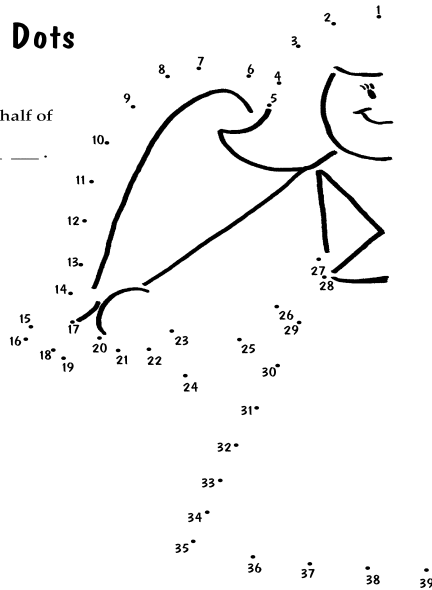
Contact: Margaret Crowell 6760 8323



Connect the Dots

Connect the dots.

Then draw the other half of this _____.



Angels

Here are some Bible verses that tell us some things that angels have done and can do for us. Can you match the verse and action?

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| 1. Heb 1:14 | a. gave directions to Peter |
| 2. Luke 1:11-20 | b. rolled back the stone |
| 3. Acts 12:7-10 | c. gave instruction to Philip |
| 4. Mat 2:13 | d. spirits in divine service |
| 5. Luke 22:43 | e. appeared as strangers to whom we should show hospitality |
| 6. Mat 28:2 | f. brought good news to Zechariah |
| 7. Acts 8:26 | g. appeared to Jesus and gave him strength |
| 8. Heb 13:2 | h. guard us and bear us up |
| 9. Ps 91:11-12 | i. appeared to Joseph in a dream |

Answers:
1. d
2. f
3. c
4. b
5. e
6. g
7. a
8. h
9. i



Lectionary Readings

Sun	10	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13*	Fri	15	1 Thessalonians
Mon	11	Isaiah 61:1-7*			5:16-28*
Tue	12	Isaiah 61:8-11*	Sat	16	Luke 1:46-55
Wed	13	Isaiah 65:17-25	Sun	17	Psalm 126*
Thu	14	John 1:6-8, 19-28*			* Denotes Sunday lectionary readings

Even as John turns to his announcement of the "one who is coming after me," he continues pounding the Pharisees and Sadducees. He does not refer to the Coming One as compassionate, but as "stronger than I am" (v 11). John's implication seems to be, "If you think I'm being tough on you, just wait until the one coming next arrives!"

Matthew never tells us directly what John's emotional state is during all of this, but from John's powerful words and energetic sentences, it is clear that this is not a dispassionate lecture; except for the fact that John's comments are right on target, they could almost be a viscous attack.

In contrast to the picture of the Baptizer we get from Matthew 3, John 1 portrays a calm, reasonable man having a patient conversation with some priests and Levites. The priests were likely Sadducees, since that was the sect to which Jewish priests belonged, but here, John doesn't slam them as he did in the Matthew text. This passage also makes no mention of John's rough clothing and spartan crunchy sweet diet.



This delegation of religious professionals had been "sent" by "the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem" (John 1:19) to learn more about John. The "Jewish leaders in Jerusalem" included the Pharisees (v 24), but the phrase may have meant the Sanhedrin, the highest judicial and ecclesiastical council of the Jewish people at that time. Its membership included both Sadducees and Pharisees, under the controlling influence of the high priest. This council made it its business to vet anyone claiming to be a prophet or the Messiah. While John was making no such claim, the very size of the crowds he was drawing with his preaching probably impelled the Jewish leaders to check him out.

Thus, when these priests and Levites come to John and ask him, "Who are you?" they're not inquiring about his family identity. In fact, they almost certainly already know that. John's father, Zechariah, had been, like some of them, a priest (Luke 1:5), and even if he was deceased by the time John was an adult (which is likely; he was "very old" when John was conceived [Luke 1:7]), he would still be remembered by some of his younger colleagues.

So when this deputation asks John who he is, he quickly surmises that they want to know if he thinks he is the Messiah. He immediately and straightforwardly dispels that notion: "I'm not the Christ," he says "Then who are you?" they ask. "Are you Elijah?"

Elijah's time on earth had been more than 800 years before John's, but he had been transported directly to heaven in a windstorm without dying (*2 Kings 2:11*). This fueled an expectation among some Jews that he would return to signal the arrival of the messianic age.

John is not Elijah, but it's understandable that his questioners might wonder if he was.

Jesus later said that John was Elijah (*Matthew 11:14; 17:10-13*), though he was probably speaking metaphorically. In the announcement to Zechariah that he would have a son, the angel said that son would be "equipped with the spirit and power of Elijah" (*Luke 1:17*), but he did not say that John would actually be Elijah. In any case, John remains unruffled as he tells his questioners that he's not that ancient figure come again.

"Are you the prophet?" they ask. In John's day, some Jews believed that a foretold prophet to come would be the Messiah. John plainly replies that he is not that prophet.

Well, then, "Who are you?" the delegation demands, adding, "We need to give an answer to those who sent us".

John replies by describing himself as a voice, citing Isaiah 40:3: "I am a voice crying out in the wilderness, Make the Lord's path straight . . ." (*v 23*). This "voice" identity is a point in common with the Matthew 3 reading (*v 3*). There, it's the narrator, Matthew, rather than the Baptizer himself who quotes Isaiah 40:3 and applies it to John, but the agreement between the John and Matthew passages about the Baptizer's role is clear.

The delegation isn't finished with John yet, however. They want to know, if he isn't the Christ, Elijah, or the prophet, why he is baptizing people. Jewish rites included baptism, but not for people who were born Jews; baptism was used for Gentiles who were entering into Judaism. But here's John, who denies being a prophet or the Messiah, asking everybody, Gentiles and Jews alike, to be baptized.

John responds that he baptizes with water, but that one far greater stands among them, whom they have not yet recognized for who he is (*v 26*). He means Jesus, of course, and the implication is that the arrival of Jesus is so momentous that everybody needs to be cleansed to be ready for it.

Throughout this entire encounter, John's answers are direct and even terse, but they are always reasonable.



Prayers

Prayer Focus—Tamworth City

Today we focus on Pastoral the Uniting Church in Australia, ordained ministry, Councils of the Church, those who deliver and receive home communion today. Please uphold these in your private prayers during the week.

Ecumenical Prayer Calendar

Keep the people of Cape Verde, The Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Senegal in your prayers this week.

Prayer Diary—Tamworth Churches

This week we pray for the leaders and activities of the Community Presbyterian Church, Life Church, Hospital Chaplain, St Paul's Anglican Church, Harvest Church, Liberty Church, and Calrossy School.

Presbytery Prayer Points

Pray for congregations connecting with local communities and sharing God's love and abundant grace through this Christmas Season.

Scripture in Schools

Coming to a close for 2017. A well deserved break for everyone. Special thanks for those who have led classes in our high schools this year. As usual funding is solely from donations. If you would like to contribute: A/c name TSCEAI, BSB 032 621, A/c No. 372 372. Thank you.

Prayer Chain

If you have a concern that you would particularly like prayer support for, please contact Judith Archbold 6766 6716 or Ted Woodhart 6766 1804.

Maintenance Items

Transport to Church

Can you help with transport to church? Maybe you've got a spare seat and can pick someone up from nearby on your way. Contact the office on 6766 5311.

UnitingCare Target Christmas Appeal

We're now in full swing with help needed on Sunday, 17 December from 12noon for hamper preparations. The Tamworth East Scout Troupe will be joining us in this endeavour. Monday will see the sorting of the gifts in preparation for allocation. Tuesday we'll do a last check and then on Wednesday people will be calling at the office all day to collect their hamper and gifts. Thanks for taking part in this special outreach to our community.

Meals on Wheels Kitchen Roster

See earlier plea for assistance. Our next rostered day will be Tuesday, 19 December from 8am.

Worship on Sunday, 24 December 2017—Advent 4 (& Christmas Eve)

9am Worship Service with Rev Chris Wright. No morning tea today.

5pm Carol Crawl at the St Andrew's Village commencing at McKay House, then on to Alblas Lodge and finally in the Village Community Hall. All are welcome to join in.

7:30pm Christmas Eve Worship with Rev Chris Wright.

Christmas Day Worship, Monday, 25 December

8am Christmas Worship Service with Rev Chris Wright.

Worship on Sunday, 31 December 2017

Worship service with Rev Chris Wright. NO Morning Tea.

Diary Dates

- 2018—8-13 SU Chaffey Camp Yrs7-12.
- 2018—13 January SUITE— How to engage naturally in conversation about Jesus—inter-church training event.
- 2018—21 January Hallsville's annual Country Gospel Breakfast.
- 2018—22-27 January Country Music Mission SU Tent.
- 2018—2/3 February annual NENW Presbytery Preaching with Paul: the Corinthian Correspondence. Flyers now available. Register at the office.

Like most of us, John was neither all firebrand nor all rationalist, but both aspects of his personality served to help him be a witness, a voice, testifying to the light that is Jesus. In fact, John the Gospel writer stated that role specifically: "A man named John was sent from God. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him everyone would believe in the light" (*John 1:6-7*). Significantly, the Gospel writer adds one more "not" about John: "He himself wasn't the light" (*v 8*).

Now, a question: Do you think John was passionate about his work?

Perhaps you've never considered that question before, but anybody who would live the ascetic life, wear coarse camelhair clothing, and eat locusts and wild honey, as John did, has to be considered a zealot, doesn't he? And what is zeal but passion in overdrive?

It would seem certain that John was passionate about his ministry. He was clearly inspired by God in his pronouncements about Jesus and passionate in his call for repentance.

He faithfully announced the coming of the Messiah, confronted those who because of self-righteousness weren't getting the message, and declared himself unworthy to carry the sandals of this Coming One. That sounds to me like being fairly passionate.

Jesus needs passionate people. The passion of John the Baptist is a mood and an attitude of Advent. From him, we can learn that passion is not merely a feeling, it is allowing God to possess us. For some, that passion will demonstrate itself in some emotional expression, but also in more sedate ways. We see passion in persistence, in perseverance, in stepping up to the plate, in showing up, in the things we gladly spend our energy on, and in the depth of our commitments.

Traveling the Advent journey of passion can bring us to Christmas with delight, ready to celebrate what God did in sending Jesus as the light to our world. It can also help us be ready to be a witness to that light.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Are there projects or goals in your life that seem to be at a standstill? How might Advent be your season to find the passion to move these things forward?



God does not call us to be successful, He calls us to be faithful, like John. Are there areas in your life that call for passion and faithfulness?

Whilst some opportunities, ministries and ventures in our lives don't seem to be "successful", can you recall experiences of God's faithfulness and presence with you during these times?

In John 1:5 we read, "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood/overcome it."

What do you think this darkness is?

In the world? In your own life?

What do you understand the Second Coming to mean?

What role does it play in your Christian faith and practice?

Prayer

O Lord, let Advent be for me a time of spiritual renewal, so that I may come to Christmas with a deeper passion for serving you with my head, my heart, and my voice. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.



CHRISTMAS IS THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS, THE SAVIOUR OF MANKIND

"Alive in Christ, Serving God, Empowered by the Spirit" 6

Christmas Blessings from the Uniting Churches in Tamworth



Merry Christmas from the Uniting Churches in Tamworth. We extend a warm welcome to you to worship with us
Peel Valley

Friday, 15th 6pm Carol Service & Supper (Hallsville—
Manilla Road)

Sunday, 17th 11am Peel Valley
Congregational Service at
Hallsville (Manilla Road)
Lunch to follow

Christmas Eve 11am West Tamworth
Christmas Day 9am Hallsville (Manilla Rd)

Tamworth City (Cnr Marius & Bourke Sts)

Christmas Eve 9am and 7:30pm
Christmas Day 8am

Tamworth Southside (440 Goonoo Goonoo Rd, Op.
Big Golden Guitar)

Christmas Eve 9:30am and 11:30pm
Christmas Day 8am

Next Week & Beyond

Worship on Sunday, 17 December 2017—Advent 3

Worship service with Rev Chris Wright, occasional choir. Christmas Morning Tea including Marie's fruit cake, homemade shortbread and more in the St Andrew's Room. After morning tea set-up for Christmas Appeal Hamper preparations. 11am Rev Chris at Hallsville for Peel Valley service & lunch.



"Alive in Christ, Serving God, Empowered by the Spirit" 11

Compassionate Friends Remembrance Service

You are invited to attend the Compassionate Friends Remembrance Service on Wednesday, 13 December from 6pm in our church. The service will be led by Rev Jim Furze. A light supper will follow.

Advent Studies

Rev Chris Wright will be leading the next Advent Study on Wednesday, 13 December. Two sessions—one at 2pm and one at 7:30pm. The studies will also be available in the notice sheet each week. Come and join a group to share your study with others.

Rural Home Nursing

Meeting in the St Andrew's Room on Thursday, 14 December from 12noon.

Craft Group

The Craft Group is held on the first and third Friday each month. Bring along your craft and we'll share in some chit chat, morning tea, and get a bit of craft done too. Contact Lorraine Turner 6766 6891. Next on 15 December.

School Term 4 Ends

Friday, 15 December.

Hallsville Carol Service

Join the fun and sing-a-long at the Hallsville Carol Service on Friday, 15 December from 6pm. All are welcome.

Bendemeer 150th Anniversary/Christmas Celebration

Note change of date for the Bendemeer 150th Anniversary Celebrations, NOW SATURDAY, 16 DECEMBER (sorry wrong date/time last week) from 7pm in Bendemeer. Everyone's welcome to join in the celebrations on this special occasion.

Carols in the Park

Join the local community for Carols in the Park on Saturday, 16 December at 6pm in Bicentennial Park, Tamworth.

Today's Information

Worship on Sunday, 10 December 2017—Advent 2

Worship service with Rev Chris Wright, Children and Youth Vision supported Projects. Sausage Sizzle and Morning Tea in the St Andrew's Room.

Korean Reborn Church

11:30am Sundays for worship and then the Jubilee Kitchen for lunch.

Combined Churches Choir

In preparation for the Carols in the Park there will be a Combined Churches Choir practice on today at 3-4pm at St John's. All welcome.

Christmas Visits

Thank you everyone. It was lovely that you could touch base with those on our visiting list this year.

With Love to the World

I am updating my order for With Love to the World. Would you like to continue to receiving your copy? Or would you like to take up a new subscription? Cost is \$20/year payable in Jan/Feb. Contact the office.

Occasional Choir

Our Occasional Choir will sing some Australian Christmas Carols on Sunday, 17 December, Advent 3. Everyone's welcome to join in (men and women). Practices will be on Thursday afternoons from 4:30pm in the Church.

Water! Water! NO Water!

All water will need to be accessed from the St Andrew's Room.

UnitingCare Target Christmas Appeal

It's getting busy—you can get involved by donating wrapping items of sticky tape and paper or donate a gift or buy a bauble at Target or make a financial donation to the appeal or help out on Sunday, 17 with food hampers, Monday, 18 with gift sorting and wrapping. Distribution will be on Wednesday, 20 December. Thank you for your support during this time.

Christmas Bowl

Envelopes have been distributed today. Prayerfully consider your donation and leave your envelope on the offering place on any Sunday during December and January. There will also be a retiring offering on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day for the Christmas Bowl.

Meals on Wheels Volunteers

We regularly participate in the Meals on Wheels Kitchen Roster every 4 weeks. It's an early start at 8am but a most enjoyable morning (we might even have coffee when we're done). Looking for volunteers to assist on a roster each month. If you can spare a few hours every other month, please contact Jim & Lorraine Furze 6761 7371.

This Week's Events

KYB Study Groups

Both Groups in recess until 29 January. There will be only one group in the new year at 1:30pm at the home of Paul & Lorraine Turner, 26 Upper St.

Opportunity Shop

Our Opportunity Shop is located at 24 Darling Street. Normal hours 10am-4pm Mondays to Fridays and 9am-12noon on Saturdays. Contact Lorraine (0401 762 463) or Judy (0418 662 081). Our last trading day this year will be Friday, 22 December reopening Tuesday, 2 January 2018.



Funeral

We extend our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of Brian Wilder who passed away this week. Funeral will be held on Monday, 11th at 11am.

Carols in the Corridors

Annual Carolling in the Tamworth Base Hospital. Meet at the Chapel at 5:30pm and join a light supper afterwards.

Church Office

Regular hours 9am-2pm Tuesdays to Fridays. *Nicolette*

Rainbow Cottage End of Year Concert

Jubilee Hall on Tuesday, 12 December from 5pm. A wonderful connection with our local Child Care Facility and Community. All welcome.

Church Council Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the Church Council will be held on Tuesday, 12 December from 7:30pm. AGM will be followed by a cool drink/nibbles then our usual meeting. Thanks everyone.

Op Shop Working Bee

Sorting each Wednesday in the Vestry. Lots of chit-chat with your hard work and then a cuppa! Morning tea in the Office. All helpers welcome. Next one on 13 December.

Compassionate Friends

Meeting in the St Andrew's Room from 10am on Wednesday, 13 December.

Advent Studies

Rev Chris Wright will be leading the next Advent Study on Wednesday, 13 December. Two sessions—one at 2pm and one at 7:30pm. The studies will also be available in the notice sheet each week. Come and join a group to share your study with others.

