



26 July 2020

Tamworth City Uniting Church

Contact Details:

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Other Useful Local Contacts:

- **Southside Office:** Ph/Fx 6765 3714 PO Box 5101, South Tamworth 2340, Email tsuoffice@gmail.com, Website www.tsuc.org.au
- **Southside Lay Preachers:** David Bissett 0400 186 723; Rob Wood 0447 425 411; John Nash 0428 333 358
- **Young Family Worker:** Jillian Cumberland 0402 341 684 Email: jillian.steppingstones.uca@hotmail.com
- **Peel Valley:** Margaret Crowell Mb 0408 660 025
- **UNITING St Andrew's Village** 1800 864 846 Chaplain Rev Henry Swindon 0466 445 632
- **UNITING Rainbow Cottage** 6766 7655 Sharn Mason

To continue to support our ministry financially by setting up a direct deposit into our accounts using phone or internet banking:
Account Name: Tamworth City Uniting Church
BSB: 634 634
Account No.: 100026126
Reference: Offering

Rev Betty Stroud has prepared this week's worship resources. Zoom morning tea is at 10am, look out for your email link from Rev Betty this week. Betty will be in Orange for the next week. Nicolette is in the office as usual, although closed to the public.

Please knock on the door if you need to see her. Stay up to date with safe health practices. Take care.

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls.

Matt 13:45



This Week's Notes

News Items

- Congratulations to Dorothy Marshall, who celebrated her 87th Birthday last week.
- **We will have a virtual 'morning tea' at 10am on Sunday morning. Watch out for an invitation from Rev Betty at about 9:50am on Sunday.**
- We've been having fun at our morning teas. Finding out lots of things about people that we didn't know before. Last week it was all the different Bible Characters that are our favourites and how we celebrate

our birthdays—year at a time! (thank you Malcolm). Questions to God that maybe we could answer by doing the right thing in the first place! I think brussels sprouts won the vegetable to be kicked out (even if a couple of people did like them).

- We had a great time at our Trivia Night last Thursday—Thank you Norm & Jeannette for all the work you put into preparing these great evenings.
- **Maybe you'd like to invite someone not on Zoom for morning tea to join us.**
- **COVID Safety Plans:** Every group in the church and those hiring will be required to complete a COVID-19 Safety Plan to be submitted to Council for approval before recommencing. Council will meet regularly via ZOOM to assess these applications before they are forwarded to Presbytery and Synod.



Upcoming Events

Sunday, 26 July: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea.

Monday, 27 July: 9:30am Kairos Sewing Group recommencing in Jubilee Hall.

Thursday, 31 July: 10am Stepping Stones recommencing in Dunn Hall.

Sunday, 2 August: Message from Barry Gillett online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea.

Sunday, 9 August: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online, 10am Zoom Morning Tea..

Tuesday, 11 August: 7pm Church Council meeting in the church.

Sunday, 16 August: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online, 10am Zoom Morning Tea.

Sunday, 23 August: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online, 10am Zoom Morning Tea.

Sunday, 30 August: Message from Peter Battle online, 10am Zoom Morning Tea.

Website, Offering and Banking Details

Our webpage has worship resources, order of service and the notice sheet each week. There is also a recorded message from Betty or the Lay Preachers on the Worship Resources page at <https://ucatamworthcity.wordpress.com/>

At this time it is important to maintain contact with each other. A telephone call is a great way to do this.

To continue to support our ministry financially by setting up a direct deposit into our accounts using phone or internet banking details on bottom of front page. If you don't have access to these facilities we encourage you to put aside your weekly offering in an envelope to give to the church at a convenience time or leave in the box on the verandah of the office. Thank you.

Synod Newsletter Items

NEW SUBJECTS @ UTCA prayer

Here are some of the exciting new subjects being taught at the United Theological College in the coming semester (starting in mid-July). Students may take these as part of a degree, as a single-subject, or as an auditor. All subjects will be taught in North Parramatta but are also available via zoom. For more information or to enrol contact Joanne Stokes: JoanneS@nswact.uca.org.au.

Introduction to New Testament, Jesus the Christ, Being the Church and Introduction to Practical Theology

UNITING EARTH CLIMATE CONFERENCE

This year's Climate Pastoral Care and Church Climate Action Training will be combined in three essential part-days of skills development and action building from July 30th to 1st of August.

Bushfires, smoke, drought, flooding, hailstorms and more! Australia has really been feeling the impacts of climate change already this year, and climate anxiety and grief seem to be at their highest level ever in our communities. How can we as churches, Christian leaders and pastoral practitioners, offer people the pastoral care and support they need at this time – both within our churches and in the wider community?

How can we empower our communities to take action on climate and advocate to government to increase their sense of power and agency, and decrease their climate anxiety? *Come along to discuss, contribute and learn together.*

HEALTHY CHURCHES EXPO:

Are there areas of your church or congregation that could do with a health check? The Healthy Churches Expo is a day designed to assist churches, whether they are small or large, with a broad range of information, tools and resources to maintain and improve their health. Topics include healthy church governance, raising and managing church finances, creating a culture of generosity, recruiting, retaining and motivating volunteers, revitalising community engagement, healthy faith sharing, transforming conflict. The cost of \$20 includes lunch, morning and afternoon tea. The program starts at 9 am and finishes at 4.30 pm on Saturday, 5 September at the Centre for Ministry in North Parramatta.

Prayers

Prayer Focus—Tamworth City

Today we focus on Pastoral Partners, Elders, St Andrew's Village, Fellowship Committee activities, Hospital Visitation and Opportunity Shop and Sorting. Please uphold these in your private prayers during the week.

Ecumenical Prayer Calendar

Keep the people of Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico your prayers this week.

NENW Presbytery

Keep in your prayers work being carried out to have worship connections with congregations during the COVID-19 virus restrictions and the transition back to physical worship. There are lots of exciting things happening out there! Working together as restrictions lift.

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.

Church Council

Keep our Church Council in your prayers as they help us work through ongoing changes during the COVID-19 precautions and restrictions.

Lectionary Readings

Sun 26 Psalm 105:1-11, 45b*
Mon 27 Genesis 31:43-32:2
Tue 28 Genesis 32:3-32
Wed 29 Romans 9:1-5*
Thu 30 Romans 9:6-13

A PRAYER FOR MEETINGS:

As we meet
Help us to listen with care and patience
Help me to remain quiet and attentive
Help us to speak in appropriate and helpful ways
Help me not to interrupt, but to wait
Help us not to feel intimidated, but rather valued
Help me to focus on discerning a common mind
Help us to participate in positive ways
Help us to be your people, O God.

Amen.

John Squires is the Presbytery Minister (Wellbeing) for Canberra Region Presbytery.



Fri 31 Romans 9:14-26
Sat 1 Matthew 14:13-21*
Sun 2 Psalm 17:1-7, 15*

* Denotes Sunday lectionary readings

Seasons of the Spirit

Subversive Silence

Genesis 29:15–28; Psalm 105:1–11, 45b or Psalm 128; Romans 8:26–39; Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 .

Prayer

You whose voice thunders into the silence with the word of creative love, give us courage, resilience, and trust to know that silence need never be submission or acceptance of brokenness in our lives and in our world. May our actions be grounded in the power of your spirit at work, bringing healing into all Creation. Amen.

Biblical Background

Silence in the face of injustice is often portrayed as acquiesce, implicit acceptance, weakness grounded in fear. This week's scripture passages reminds us that silence can be a form of powerful resistance and subversion of imperial/patriarchal norms when the silence is grounded in the redemptive work of God's spirit.

Genesis 29:15–28 The exiles in Babylon, for whom the Genesis story was first compiled, would have no problem recognizing their lives in the silence of Rachel and Leah who, in today's text, are traded as a mere commodity by their father, Laban. As the full story unfolds, it becomes clear these women are only biding their time.

Rachel, Leah, and no doubt Zilpah are all astute observers of the tools employed by patriarchy and systems of domination to maintain power and control. Deception and the self-justification evidenced by Laban is made normative in systems of domination. It may have caught Jacob off guard, but it came as no surprise to the women that Laban would swap out Leah for Rachel on Rachel's wedding night for Laban to gain advantage with Jacob. The women also live with the challenge of being set up as competitors in this economic system of domination over which they have little control. All of this, the Babylonian exiles would recognize and understand.

However, as the three women know and Babylonian exiles are reminded, they still have agency and the capacity to subvert the manipulative power of imperial, patriarchal domination. They have likely heard of how Jacob's mother, Rebecca, had herself subverted patriarchal norms with her own acts of resistance. As the story unfolds, Leah and Rachel join forces in persuading Jacob to leave behind their father. For the exiles in Babylon, it comes as a strong word of hope that the God of creation and liberation is present and at work among those and through those who appear to be without a voice.

Psalm 105:1–6, 16–22, 45b is an invitation to rejoice and celebrate the subversive nature of the Holy One, who is never constrained by human systems of domination. Sing praises, says the psalmist, give thanks, as the Apostle Paul would later say, in all circumstances, because the one who subverts empires with a promise of liberation is at work. Romans 8:26–39 offers strong words of comfort for all who suffer and who see little concrete evidence for hope. The encouragement is to never give up because even in our weakness the Holy One is there to strengthen us with a love from which we can never be separated. Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52 gives testimony to the often hidden and subtle power of the Realm of God at work in our lives and world. The parables tell that the reality of God's realm is at work now, and we are called to decide if this is the realm in which we choose to live.



Questions

Silence in the face of injustice is sometimes the prudent and only option. Rebecca and Leah had little power or authority in a patriarchal world to overtly resist the dictates of their father Laban, no matter how unjust. Yet, silence is not the same as acceptance. The sisters remain free to act when the time feels right. Their subversive silence enables Rachel and Leah to play their part in God's unfolding story of freedom, liberation, and covenant. How would the Babylonian exiles have heard this story? How might the example of these women be a guide for them in their own liberation? What keeps us from giving up in situations that seem overwhelming? How can silence reflect a deep resistance to injustice?

