



5 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

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.

Nicolette is in the office as usual, although closed to the public. Stay up to date with safe health practices. Take care.



## This Week's Notes

### News Items

- **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.**
- Rev Betty has returned from a relaxing and refreshing time of leave. Thank you to Peter and Barry for preparing worship resources for the past two weeks.
- Please keep Julie Bennett and Barbara McLean in your prayers. They are both having health issues at present.
- It was good to hear stories from people at the Zoom morning tea about where they have enjoyed worship. Quite a myriad of places and styles of worship. Thank you everyone for sharing. A lot of people have been worshipping all over during Covid-19 too. I think 'blue' was the most popular favourite colour, with any bright colours closely coming in second place.

## Notes From Synod

### *Discerning a way forward – Questions for Church Councils, Ministers and Lay Leaders*

Church Councils or other local governance bodies need to work carefully and systematically through this list of questions, and develop a COVID-19 Safe Plan for the church property or properties under their oversight.

#### *Things to consider before reopening for worship*

Do we have a compelling reason to return to physical gathering, instead of what we are doing now?

What we should understand is that an easing of restrictions should not be interpreted as a recommendation to gather for physical worship

Consider how online ministry might continue if people are also gathering in the building

Consider the unintended impact on returning to the most vulnerable in our community

How will we continue to minister to the most vulnerable in our community, noting that returning to physical gathering or volunteering is and will likely remain high risk for the foreseeable future?

Do we have a sense as to how people (volunteers, parents, children, vulnerable) in our church feel about participating and gathering together in the near future?

What needs to change for us to re-open right now?

Can we develop, implement and maintain a COVID-19 safe plan?

Consider improving welcoming processes, especially for those who might have only engaged with us online

By what means will maximum numbers of people be maintained, e.g. do we need some form of ticketing/booking system?

In the light of all the above considerations, what do we believe is the wise thing for us to do?

As gathering restrictions are progressively eased

What are some of the good things we have discovered that we would like to continue?

Are there some things we have stopped doing that we don't need to start again?

What new opportunities do we have to engage with and serve our community?

How will we continue to communicate each new step to people and those around us?

How will we continue to minister to/involve the most vulnerable in our community, noting that returning to physical gathering and/or volunteering is and will likely remain high risk, for the foreseeable future?

*Why has the Synod recommended that vulnerable and high risk people be actively discouraged from gathering for worship and what does this mean?*

Synod has taken a conservative and cautious position in the interests of those who are potentially the most vulnerable in our communities and so as not to create unnecessary pressure on members, volunteers, Ministers or Church Councils to re-gather until such time as it can be done safely. The Synod holds the view that whilst the Government may have eased and continue to ease restrictions for gathering, this is not and should not be interpreted as a recommendation to do so, without careful planning and consideration of the risks.

The government continues to advise that, vulnerable people should limit physical gathering, see website for more information. As a minimum Church Councils should not approve opening for worship unless they are able to prepare and implement a Covidsafe plan. Those who are vulnerable and high risk in our communities should be made aware of the risks of physical gathering, at this time, and the controls that have been put in place so that they can make informed (individual) decisions.

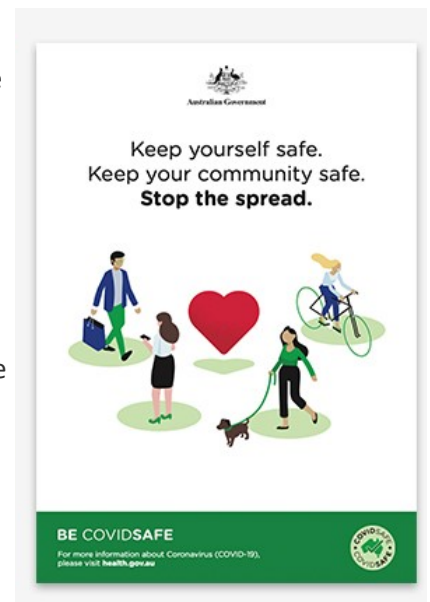
#### *Who can be involved in pre and post event cleaning?*

Volunteers who are vulnerable or high risk should not undertake cleaning.

Specialist contract cleaning should be considered where ever possible. If a cleaning process is difficult or impossible, this is a good reason to continue online gatherings.

#### *Can vulnerable people attend church / volunteer?*

High risk and vulnerable people should be actively discouraged from physically gathering – including for worship - and should not be engaged in volunteering activities (requiring physical contact), for the foreseeable future. This is to protect their health and wellbeing.



### Upcoming Events

Sunday, 5 July: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea.  
Tuesday, 7 July: 12noon Adult Fellowship lunch at Turner’s (26 Upper Street).  
Sunday, 12 July: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea.  
Sunday, 19 July: Message from Rev Betty Stroud online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea.  
Sunday, 26 July: Message from Rev Betty Stroud 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:

Account Name: Tamworth City Uniting Church  
BSB: 634 634  
Account Number: 100026126  
Reference: Offering

If you don’t have facilities to phone or internet bank we encourage you to put aside your weekly offering in an envelope to give to the church at a convenience time. Leave in the box on the verandah at the office or during office hours. Thank you.

*Zoom gathering—  
lots of happy smiles!*



## *Prayers*

### Prayer Focus—Tamworth City

Today we focus on the Uniting Church in Australia, Ordained Ministry, and Councils of the Church. Please uphold these in your private prayers during the week.

### Ecumenical Prayer Calendar

Keep the people of Bolivia, Chile and Peru 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.



## *Lectionary Readings*

Sun 5	<b>Psalm 45:10-17*</b>	Fri 10	Matthew 13:1-17
Mon 6	Isaiah 55:6-13	Sat 11	Matthew 18-23
Tue 7	Genesis 25:19-34*	<b>Sun 12</b>	<b>Psalm 119:105-112*</b>
Wed 8	Genesis 26:1-11	* Denotes Sunday lectionary readings	
Thu 9	Romans 8:1-11*		

# Seasons of the Spirit

## A Love that Makes Neighbours

Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67; Psalm 45:10–17 or Song of Solomon 2:8–13; Romans 7:15–25a; Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30

### Prayer

**God of love and kindness, we thank you for your model of courageous love. We pray that you will help us to make the stranger our friend each and every day of our lives, turning our lives outward in an ever-expanding sense of connection and love. Amen.**

### Biblical Background

This week's stories unite around the theme of courageous love; love that transforms strangers into friends in life, and in world-altering ways. At the centre of this week's readings is the model of Rebekah, who will become Isaac's wife, and her example of offering water to a stranger who thirsts.

**Genesis 24:34–38, 42–49, 58–67** Rebekah lives in the town of Nahor, where she goes to the well in an everyday act of drawing water. Here she finds a man who thirsts. She displays no fear of bringing water to someone she has never met, but simply welcomes the stranger. The consequences of this act of kindness are life-changing because the stranger who has taken water from Rebekah is really the servant of Isaac, son of Abraham and Sarah. The servant sees this act of welcome as a sign that she will marry Isaac. Rebekah's act of generosity becomes the servant's key to knowing her true character, which sets her on the path to partnership with Isaac as a wife, a guide for her descendants, and the continuing story of the Hebrew Scriptures.

**Psalm 45:10–17** retells Rebekah's story, saying, "I will cause your name to be celebrated in all generations" (v. 17). A simple and humble act of kindness such as Rebekah's thus echoes through history in unforeseen ways. Her story of service and courage to help a stranger still resounds. Hospitality, even in its simplest forms, has the capacity to transform a community and our individual lives in beautiful and unforeseeable ways.

There is a need to work hard, and constantly, to have this kind of effortless display of hospitality that we see in Rebekah and so many other biblical figures. If you substitute the word "love" for "law" in **Romans 7:15–25a**, the passage reads as one in which Paul is struggling to love. "I delight in the law (love) of God in my inmost self," he writes, "but I see in my members another law (love) at war in the law of my mind" (7:22–23). Regardless of his desire to love, Paul feels like he cannot do so. He longs to listen to his inner being, which prioritizes love.

Similarly, in **Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30**, Jesus accuses the crowd of not receiving him with acceptance and love. Instead, he sees that people have made assumptions out of fear based on his appearance. The trend of apathy and turning away from love and hospitality continues today, as people rush past scenes of suffering in cities and towns, on the news, and in their own hearts. The key, says Jesus, is to turn to God for the assurance to make decisions out of compassion. The yoke of God is the yoke of courage, compassion, and hospitality that transcends fear and boundaries.

### Questions

Each of this week's readings builds on the theme of hospitality – its transformative nature, its beauty, the difficulty we have expressing it, and finally its complete attachment to the teachings of God and the living out of a life of true faith. The action Rebekah takes is both simple and transformative – *and* it is also a hard one to open ourselves to make, as Paul points out. Yet, a truly loving life of faith demands this exact kind of courageous openness to others. How can we open our lives – our churches, our communities, our own hearts – to this kind of radical compassion, courage, and trust? How have we built spontaneous love and compassion, and how can we continue to develop this spiritual muscle of hospitality?

