



21 June 2020

Tamworth City Uniting Church

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Other Useful Local Contacts:

- **Southside Office:** Ph/Fx 6765 3714 PO Box 5101, South Tamworth 2340, Email tsucoffice@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

Mr Peter Battle has prepared this week's worship resources. Zoom morning tea is at 10am, look out for your email link from Nicolette this week.

Nicolette is in the office as usual, although closed to the public.

Stay up to date with safe health practices. Take care.



Our webpage has worship resources, order of service and the notice sheet each week. There is also a recorded message from Betty 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. Make a cuppa and give someone a call.

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.

This Week's Notes

Good News Items

- We've been enjoying some lovely morning teas on Zoom at 10am each week. Lots of different people come and go over the morning, it's lovely to see all the smiling faces.
- **We will have a virtual 'morning tea' at 10am on Sunday morning. Watch out for an invitation from the Church Office this time (Rev Betty is away).**
- Notes from our church council meeting: our first Zoom church council meeting was held on Tuesday, 9 June. It was very well attended with 22 people joining in. We ratified the decisions of the Church Council Executive during the early part of the COVID-19 crisis. Broke into discussion groups to look at what might be in our future and how we are feeling about that. The Property Committee, Safety Officer and Admin will look at all the regulations and compliance items for each of the groups returning to physical meetings on our site.
- Rev Betty is taking two week's leave (17 June—30 June). We wish Betty well as she takes a well deserved break. Peter Battle and Barry Gillett will be preparing worship resources on those who Sundays.
- Op Shop News—sorry we are not ready to open yet. Your health and well-being is our first priority when considering when to come back from lockdown. However, in preparation, would you like to ring Judy (0418 662 081) or the office (6766 5311) to indicate if you would like to volunteer at the shop when we are ready.

Notes From Synod

- The government has put out a health checklist for churches which has been taken into consideration in our decision. However, as the Associate Secretary says in her letter, "Even though restrictions are easing, it does not make returning to face to face worship an automatically safe or wise option."
- Before re-opening can happen, all church councils must meet and work out their own plan for how it will occur in their buildings, and who will be responsible for making sure the plan is carried out. Failure to comply with these guidelines can incur huge fines, and UFS will not free up any investment money to meet these fines. They will be the sole responsibility of those people caught doing the wrong thing.
- The health and safety of all members of our churches and community are at the forefront of all of our decisions. Just because you can re-open, doesn't mean you should. Caution must be exercised, and the question should be asked, "Are we anxious to resume worship to engage in Mission/Ministry, or to make ourselves feel better?"
- We understand the frustration this will cause some of you, but ask you to refrain from opening for a while longer, particularly if you can't meet all of the criteria.

Several misconceptions have arisen and I seek to bring clarity now, as follows:

1. Your COVID-19 safe plan/s **must be** approved by your Church Council. Synod and Presbytery play no role in approving your plan/s. This remains the sole responsibility of Church Council. A copy should be forwarded to the COVID mailbox (covid19@nswact.uca.org.au) and your Presbytery PRC. This is not for approval, but for clear record keeping.
2. Any third party groups wishing to hire Church property under your stewardship must give your Church Council a copy of their COVID-Safe plan. A copy should be forwarded to the COVID mailbox on behalf of the Property Trust. The Government has allowed gyms and dance groups etc. to recommence from 13th June 2020. This means your third party property hire to such groups can also proceed. Please note your Church Council must have a copy of each groups' plan to manage the Government regulations. No group should be allowed to use the hall without Church Council approving their plan.
3. Communion and/or Passing of the Peace must be delivered without contact. This does not mean they cannot be celebrated – but how you will ensure the no contact rule is adhered to should be addressed in your plan.

Upcoming Events in June

Thursday, 17 June: Rev Betty on leave until 30 June

Sunday, 21 June: Message from Mr Peter Battle online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea

Monday, 22 June: UCA Anniversary

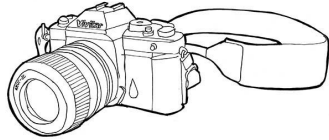
Tuesday, 23 June & Wednesday, 24 June: Saltbush Staff Meeting in St Andrew's Room

Sunday, 28 June: Message from Mr Barry Gillett online; 10am Zoom Morning Tea.

Photo Hunt...

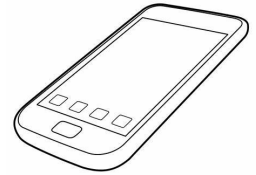
Grab your phone/camera and see how many of these items you can photograph:

Living animal
Flower
Water droplet
The word 'Jesus'
Something yellow
A board game you like
A brick
Something round
A sandal
Milk
A bicycle



Your favourite book
A STOP sign
A toe
A computer game
Something made of pasta
A window
A number 2
A stack of three blocks
A vacuum cleaner
A handbag/wallet
A clock
Your favourite chair
A doorknob
Oldest piece of jewellery

How did you go?



*Smiling is infectious,
You can catch it like the flu.
Someone smiled at me today,
And I started smiling too.*

Prayers

Prayer Focus—Tamworth City

Today we focus on the Children's Ministry, Christian Education, Scripture in Schools, Sunday School, Young Families Worker, Mission Outreach, Doing it for our Farmers and Rainbow Cottage. Please uphold these in your private prayers during the week.

Ecumenical Prayer Calendar

Keep the people of Brazil in 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 21 Psalm 86:1-10, 16-17*
Mon 22 Genesis 22:1-14*
Tue 23 Genesis 22:15-19
Wed 24 Genesis 23:1-10
Thu 25 Romans 6:12-23*

Fri 26 Romans 7:1-6
Sat 27 Matthew 10:40-42*
Sun 28 Psalm 13*

* Denotes Sunday lectionary readings

Seasons of the Spirit

Solidarity

Genesis 21:8–21; Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17; Romans 6:1b–11; Matthew 10:24–39 .

Prayer

Gracious God, you are with us in times of great joy and in our wilderness moments. Help us to stand fearlessly in solidarity with those who are marginalized, just as you have been present with us. Grant us the courage to seek justice in your name. Amen.

Biblical Background

This week's readings ask us to consider what it means to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized. Solidarity may mean providing means of survival and support as God provided Hagar in the wilderness. But as Jesus shows, solidarity may also require us to enter uncomfortable, disruptive spaces in our pursuit of justice.

Genesis 21:8–21 shifts the narrative focus from Abraham and Sarah to Hagar and Ishmael. With the text repeatedly reminding the reader that Hagar is Egyptian, Sarah labels the slave woman and her son a foreign threat to Abraham's lineage. Abraham casts Hagar and Ishmael out into the lethal desert conditions at Sarah's request and, according to the storyteller, with God's approval. However, Hagar and Ishmael are not forgotten. Facing death, both cry out. God hears them. God stands in solidarity with and provides for those cast out into the wilderness by society. As womanist theologian, Delores Williams, explains, this solidarity does not always fully liberate those who are oppressed, but it secures their survival. This offers hope that those who are oppressed and labelled as outsiders by society today have the power to find their voice, a voice that calls God and all of God's people to listen and act.

In Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17, we hear the cry to God from one who suffers affliction. It is a cry, like Hagar's, calling for strength, comfort, and God's favour. This call recognizes the power of God and understands that God uses this power to stand with those who society scorns or deems shameful.

Romans 6:1b–11 invites believers to recognize the cost of discipleship. Through baptism, believers are united with Christ. To be one with Christ involves more than a metaphorical rising in new life. It requires that Christ-followers act differently than they had previously. It requires that one live one's life like Christ – standing in solidarity with the marginalized, bringing healing, and sharing meals with those society has rejected. This new way of living is countercultural, challenging the conventions of Greco-Roman society that valued social hierarchy and status.

Matthew 10:24–39 Jesus invites his followers into space of discomfort and division. Jesus highlights that to follow him involves sacrifice and a willingness to disrupt the status quo – secrets will be brought into the open, family conflicts will arise, lives will be lost. This disruptive space mirrors the trials occurring within Matthew's primarily Jewish audience. The community was struggling with leadership, tradition, and ritual practice issues following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. Those who were following Jesus presented further complications as they disrupted communal unity through their new beliefs and practices.

Jesus reassures his followers that God values and cares for all people. Just as God cares for all Creation. While this reassurance might bring comfort, Jesus concludes with the reminder that his message does not bring peace, but the sword. To bring about the reign of God requires radical changes in society; changes that challenge power structures. Followers are called to enact this change and face the consequences that emerge from it.

Questions

God models for us how to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering. Solidarity requires that we not only listen for those suffering injustices but that we act. As followers of Christ, we enter uncomfortable spaces that disrupt our relationships to power and disrupt relationships, even with those closest to us. In doing so, we make God's love and justice more fully present in the world.

