



Luke 2:12-15 And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about".



Remember, Christmas isn't about how big the tree is, or what's under it. It's about who's around it.



Dec'14

*The Sapphire Coast Uniting
CHURCH MOUSE*

Have you done your Christmas shopping? Are the presents ready to go under the tree? Have you prepared the food for the big day? **Only 18 days to go!** Where has that year gone? I do hope that all of your preparation is going smoothly for you and that you will be able to relax and enjoy the Christmas celebrations with your family and friends.

Rev. David has spent a year travelling the Brown Mountain route and is getting into a routine. How are we, the church family, travelling now that we have had a year with a Resource minister? It has certainly been a learning curve for us and for David. We are very blessed in having lay people who can conduct a service in David's absence and thanks go to all of them.

At the October Church Council AGM, all office bearers were re-elected. As members of the Church Council, let each of us go forward in God's leading and guidance, remaining positive and encouraging one another in this new year.

To those of our church family who are not well at this time, our thoughts and prayers are with you. May you know that God is with you and may you feel His love and comfort.

Rev. David was to have a well earned break from 1st to 6th December, but unfortunately the cricket was cancelled and he came home to conduct the funeral of Neal Prosser. David has a busy time ahead with extra services here and at Cooma. May God travel with you through this time David.

A Ricky's type place has the go-ahead and will use Merimbula Uniting Church as the venue. May those taking part in this venture see their ideas come to fruition and may God bless them in their endeavours. Ross Williams has played a major role in the organisation of this initiative after seeing the success of similar places at Bega and Narooma. The Uniting Church is happy to be able to play a role in this much needed service in our community.





Wyndham Warblings

Wyndham Anglican Church Celebrates 125 Years

The thanksgiving celebration for 125 years of the Anglican Church in Wyndham on Saturday 15 November was a delightful day. Local ministers and members of the Anglican, Uniting, and Catholic churches in our area attended. Special tribute goes to Andy Cross who put so much thought, time and organisational skill into the planning of the service. Of course our choir members worked hard behind the scenes to arrange the wonderful lunch which followed in our Uniting Church Community Worship Centre. A special cake, iced by Tony Tresize was the centrepiece of the hall decorations – it was almost a shame to eat it. The little church was overflowing with guests from near and far including some who were baptised and married in the church. Bishop Trevor Edwards challenged all as he spoke from the story of Jacob's ladder to help us realise that the church is the place and face of God on earth.



Aglow

It was lovely to have Frank and Alice back with us at choir last Tuesday night. Frank will be playing his guitar for the choir when we sing to the Aglow Christmas Meeting on 4th December. Alice is also going to lend us her voice.

Carols By Candlelight

Wyndham – Mt Darragh Rural Fire Brigade has once again asked us to help with the carol singing at the special community which is being held on Saturday 13 December. The program will include the Blessing of the Fleet (of fire protection vehicles).

Planning is under way for our Ecumenical Christmas Service which will be held at 6pm pm on Sunday 21st December. Rev. David will bring us the Christmas message.

As a little girl climbed onto Santa's lap, Santa asked the usual, "And what would you like for Christmas?" The child stared at him open mouthed and horrified for a minute, then gasped, "Didn't you get my E-mail?"



Op Shop News

The op shop is doing exceedingly well with 38 staff members who are all enjoying working with us. We are pleased to welcome Libby Roberts and Juliet Robertson to our team as Supervisors. The shop lease expired at the end of November, but we have been able to get a 6 month lease with the option of extra 6 month blocks. We are still receiving positive comments from the customers about our staff and the new look of the shop and so many appreciate Anne's beautiful home-made relish, sauce and marmalades. Thanks Anne. We've also had lots of fresh lemons and passion fruit donated and these sell well too. Thanks to the donors of these. Paul also brings in plants that sell quickly. Thanks Paul. We held a High Tea for the volunteers on 11th November and it was enjoyed by all. Volunteers had to wear an outfit from the op shop and Irene West won the prize for the best outfit. Irene looked lovely in a silver pant suit with matching accessories. The full cost of the beautiful outfit was \$13. Thank you to our church ladies who supplied the delicious food for the afternoon and had the hall looking so attractive.

There has been some further re-arranging of the op shop which lets in more light and gives more room. You can actually see in through the windows now. Thanks to the ladies and two gents who helped with this. A special thanks to Morag for her yummy scones. We have been able to help some folk in need with some household goods and we have some names of people who would welcome a Christmas hamper. Christmas can be a lonely, sad time for some and I hope that just by chatting to customers who come in to the shop, we are able to brighten their day in some way. Many tell us they relax when they come to our shop....it's their therapy. We have also been able to help WIRES with electric blankets which are made into pouches for the animals.

We were pleased to be able to donate \$1000 each to one overseas and three local charities. The customers seemed more pleased that we had donated locally.

A big thank you to all who help in any way to make the op shop the success it is and also to Jeff for his much appreciated help with the book keeping.

Corinne Nicolson (Coordinator)

The Santa Claus at the shopping mall was very surprised when Emily, a young lady aged about 20 years old, walked up and sat on his lap. Now, we all know that Santa doesn't usually take requests from adults, but she smiled very nicely at him, so he asked her, 'What do you want for Christmas?'

'Something for my mother, please,' replied Emily sweetly.

'Something for your mother? Well, that's very loving and thoughtful of you,' smiled Santa. 'What would you like me to bring her?'

Without turning a hair Emily answered quickly, 'A son-in-law.'



Imlay House

4

The Services at IMLAY House continue to be held on a fortnightly basis (on the 1st & 3rd Saturdays) each month. We are grateful to have this opportunity and Audrey, Shirley and myself feel very welcomed by the staff and residents.

As a small team we are blessed to have Pauline Moulds who faithfully attends from Mariner Park to play the piano at these services – Pauline loves to exercise her ministry of music in this way. We have also been blessed to have other members of the Merimbula Congregations come from time to time to help out with music and leading the service.

During December there will be a regular Service of Holy Communion on the 6th and then on the 20th we will hold our Ecumenical Christmas Service.

In 2015 it may be necessary to change the weeks the services are held from 1st & 3rd or I will need someone else to take the services on the 1st Saturday so that I do not need to travel back from Cooma when I am meant to be there during the 4th & 1st weeks of the month.

Can I make a plea that it would be really great if others might consider helping out at these services. It only takes up an hour and a half on a Saturday.

It is very rewarding and a joy to lead & participate in worship with the Imlay residents. It is one of the things I most enjoy as part of my ministry in this community.

Rev David Russell



Merimbula Mutterings

We have many on our sick list and we are keeping Margaret, Alison and Peter in our prayers along with Shirley, Darrel and Wendy who have recently undergone surgery and especially Julie and Christine who are in need of our continuing prayers. It was pleasing to see a good outcome for Shirley's and Wendy's surgery. Audrey unfortunately had a few days in hospital and Royce has had a few attacks of the dizzies, but all seems well with them again now. We were saddened by the death of Vries Gravestain and our thoughts are with June in her loss. Also the church family were saddened to hear of the death of Fred's brother.

Our sympathy goes out to Fred and Rae.

5

Judy has undergone surgery in Canberra and it was good to hear that she is progressing well. Please keep Judy in your prayers.

The church family and the wider community were shocked and saddened by the death of Neal Prosser after a very short illness. Neal will be sadly missed by his church family and especially by the Lion's Club of which he was an enthusiastic member. We offer our deepest sympathy to Elizabeth and family. Please keep them in your prayers

Many of our church family have had the travel bug again which saw Jeff & Cathy off to Victoria, Paul & Lyn up north, Iris and John off on an enjoyable cruise, Tony and Anne tripping off in several directions and Ros and Bob off caravanning. All were pleased to see Joan & Royce return home safely from Africa. Thankfully they were not in an area near the Ebola outbreak. Many more of our church family will be travelling over Christmas and we wish you safe travels. May God go with you all and return you safely to your homes and your church family.

Fellowship group has been meeting regularly and the Christmas luncheon was held on 1st December at The Balcony with husbands joining us. A highlight in the year was a talk by Alan Scrymgeour on the marine life in the area, with beautiful images to go with it. God's creation is certainly wonderful to behold. I do hope Dulcie was able to remember all the names of the sea life to tell Ros who unfortunately missed out on Alan's talk.

Susie Morrison has now retired from nursing and is enjoying being able to concentrate on the CVS whose members continue to bring joy and companionship to those nursing home residents who are isolated and lonely.

An associated committee of church members has been formed and will be responsible for ensuring guidelines are met along with providing support for Susie in her role as Coordinator.

A basket lunch was enjoyed after church on Sunday 16th. Thank you to all who supplied the delicious food.



Council Clips:

Church Council met on Thursday 27th November. It was reported that Rev. Blair will be back in the area and will be taking services in February, March and April.

The hall floor is causing the Dance Group some angst so it was decided to try a new treatment to stop the floor becoming too slippery

The "Reaching out Foundation" was discussed and they will be using the church premises if a day and time can be negotiated. It will be for a trial period. They have had a wonderful response from volunteers.

Treasurer Jeff reported that the OP Shop has tripled the monthly takings since the restructure. Because of this the church is able to again make several donations to worthwhile charities. This is very heartening and is really thanks to the work of the Supervisors and the wonderful volunteers who give the shop so much of their time.

Get real . . .

We often hear the expression "... Oh get real ..." But I sometimes wonder what it means. What is "real"?

It will, of course, mean different things to each of us because what "the real me" is will be quite different to what is "the real you". But it is nevertheless a pretty important challenge to each of us because if we aren't "real" then what are we? We can pretend to be something/someone else, but in doing that we are not being "real".

To be "real" is to be who/what we are, as we are meant to be. To be the unique individual that we are made & meant to be!

My favorite psalm is Psalm 139. It always helps me to realize that I am unique and special – at least in God's eyes! Oh sure, there are times when I might desire to be something/someone other than who I am - I might even want to re-make myself in the image of someone else. But the truth is that (as the Psalmist says):

I am "fearfully & wonderfully made . . ." (Ps 139:14)

I reckon that realizing this has the potential to change everything! That we are who & what we are (unique in every way) – and that this is how it is meant to be – this is quite simply, life-changing!

This is what it is to be "real"!

Margaret Williams in her wonderful children's book "The Velveteen Rabbit" writes so beautifully about this. Here's a small passage from that book:

"What is REAL?" asked the rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side . . . "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out-handle?"

"Real isn't how you are made", said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you .When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become real."

"Does it hurt?" asked the Rabbit.

"Sometimes", said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. "When you are Real you don't mind being hurt".

"Does it happen all at once, like being wound up" he asked "or bit by bit?"

"It doesn't happen all at once" said the Skin Horse. "You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby.

But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand"

So, may we be able to look at ourselves in the mirror and at the people with whom we come into contact in our community and every day be able to affirm that:

We ARE "real" because this is how we are made – "Fearful & wonderful" in every way!

Rev. David

Dear God,

I am a 93 year old widow living on the State pension. Yesterday someone stole my purse. It had £100 in it, which was all the money I had in the world and no pension due until after Christmas. Next week is Christmas and I had invited two of my friends over for Christmas lunch. Without that money, I have nothing to buy food with. I have no family to turn to, and you are my only hope. God; can you please help me?

Chippenham George was really touched, and being kind hearted, he put a copy of the letter up on the staff notice board at the main Fareham sorting office where he worked. The letter touched the other postmen and they all dug into their pockets and had a whip round. Between them they raised £95. [\$170 USD] Using an officially franked Post Office envelope, they sent the cash on to the old lady, and for the rest of the day, all the workers felt a warm glow thinking of the nice thing they had done.

Christmas came and went. A few days later, another letter simply addressed to 'God' landed in the Sorting Office. Many of the postmen gathered around while George opened the letter. It read,

Dear God, How can I ever thank you enough for what you did for me? Because of your generosity, I was able to provide a lovely luncheon for my friends. We had a very nice day, and I told my friends of your wonderful gift - in fact we haven't gotten over it and even Father John, our parish priest, is beside himself with joy. By the way, there was £5 [\$10 USD] missing. I think it must have been those thieving fellows at the Post Office.

