



Sapphire Coast Uniting Church 'Lockdown' Newsletter

Week Ending Sunday 24th May

Welcome to another of our weekly emails, keeping our congregations connected during the Corona Virus shutdown. Feedback, contributions and any items for future inclusion are welcome, and can be forwarded to Jeff, Tony or via the church email.

Birthdays next week:

Gareth Evans -28th



Morning Tea

Our regular 'Morning Tea' Zoom meeting will be replaced by the Congregational Meeting this Sunday. (See meeting details below). There should be opportunity for social chat after the Congregational Meeting concludes.

Church News

* Congregational Meeting – Sunday 24th May at 11:00am, via Zoom video link. Notice of this meeting was issued previously, with the main business being to vote on a motion to issue a call to a new minister. It is important we have as many “attend” as possible. If you are unable to join via the internet yourself, it should be possible to meet on the day with someone who can, so you can still participate. Please arrange this beforehand. Note that the Meeting ID for joining the meeting is different to that of our regular morning tea meeting. Log onto zoom.us and click on 'Join a Meeting'. When prompted, enter **Meeting ID: 944-2206-3908**. You will be asked to enter a **Password: 510690**. Alternatively, just click this link to join the meeting: <https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/94422063908?pwd=Q3Y3TIFsVTRFamZYV3BaWEtrS2QxUT09> Be sure to have your computer/laptop/ipad camera and audio turned on. (If you need some assistance, call Jeff or John well beforehand). Please address any queries regarding the meeting itself to Chairman Colin. We plan to vote at this meeting, by using the 'Chat' function on your Zoom screen.

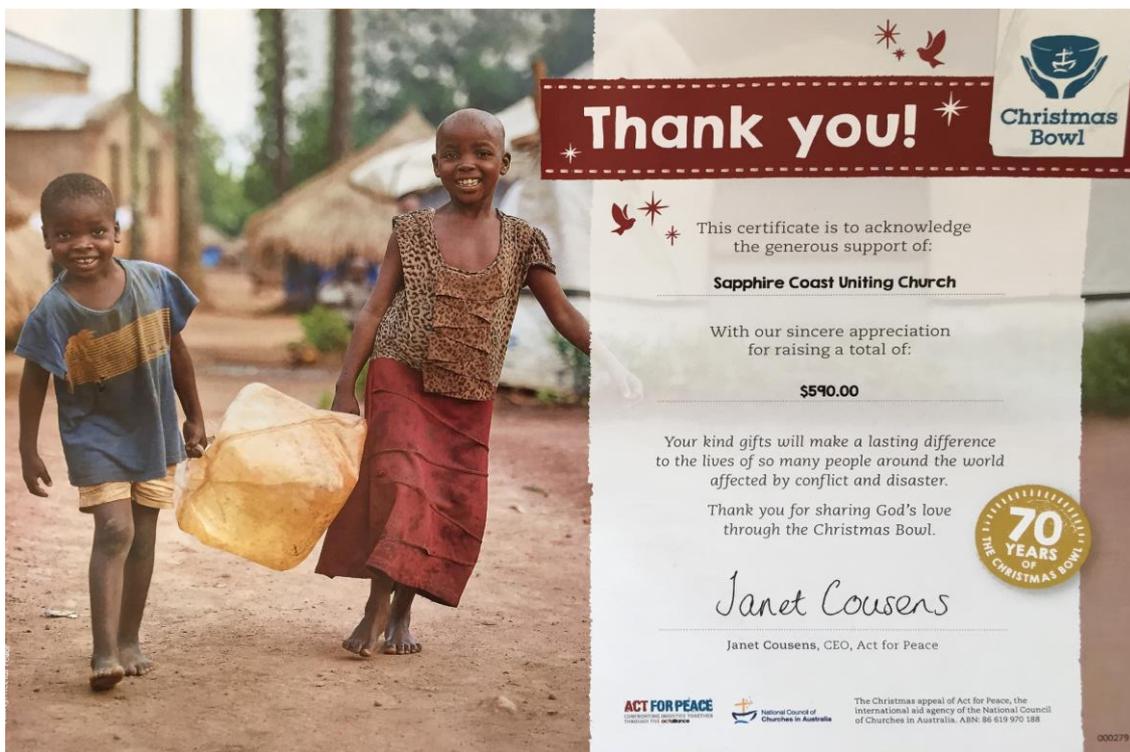
* Closure service for Rev David Russell - The planned closure service with the congregation, followed by a luncheon, clearly cannot now be held in that format. In consultation with Presbytery, current plans are to hold this service by Zoom video, with Presbytery reps remaining in Canberra, David and a couple others participating from the church, and the congregation invited to participate by logging onto the Zoom link. Further details and the Meeting ID link will be made available in next week's newsletter.

* Presbytery Meeting Report (*from Shirley McLennan*) We, all 53 of us (including Shirley, Shirley & David), gathered apart last Saturday, stretching all the way from the south coast to Jindabyne, Canberra, Goulburn and beyond. Although meeting by Zoom video sounds unwieldy, it wasn't, and we could see each other's faces. The main thrust of the meeting was to see how each congregation was getting on with the restrictions due to Covid-19. *What is new in the life of the church?* Answer – no church services; organisational meetings at a minimum; Zoom morning tea. Some of our older members not able to join in, because the new technology has left them behind. We miss the singing and unfortunately that is not going to be returned for a long while because of the danger of virus

droplets. *What have we dropped or ceased doing that doesn't need to be revived after the restrictions end?* There were mixed opinions regarding hand shaking, holding hands and kissing. *How might Presbytery staff support us at this time?* I requested insurance costs be subsidised, especially while our Op Shop is closed, as we rely heavily on the shop income. It was reported that the Greenhills Accommodation and Convention Centre in Canberra has been closed since the time of the fires. This facility normally is able to provide a lot of financial support to Presbytery.

* The next Church Council meeting will now be held at 2.00pm on **Thursday 4th June**. At this stage the meeting will be held by Zoom video, unless restrictions on indoor gathering are changed in the interim, with further details to follow. A Zoom invitation will be sent to regular attendees closer to the time.

* The UnitingCare Merimbula board meets 3-4 times a year, with the role of overseeing the administration of our local Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) and supporting Greg Wollaston in his role as co-ordinator. At the moment we have a vacancy on the board. If you are looking for a small volunteer role where you can make a contribution to your local community, please call secretary Shirley Bazley on 64959231. The UnitingCare Merimbula/CVS Board have deferred their next meeting, until such time as will allow an indoor face to face meeting.



National Volunteer Week 18-24 May Changing communities. Changing lives.

A big thank you to all those volunteers within our ranks, giving of their time to enhance the lives of others. We think particularly of all the Op Shop volunteers, all our CVS volunteers, and all those working behind the scenes for the church. You do make a real difference!

Elders

Thank you to our Elders, who continue to be the main point of contact for our congregation. While most of the congregation have been able to receive our weekly newsletters by email, there are a number who do not have internet access, and rely on others keep them informed. Similarly, while a

group of the congregation have been able to keep in touch with weekly Zoom video 'Morning Tea' calls, the majority are not in this situation. Please continue to be mindful of those who may be missing out on these contacts. A weekly Elder's call, or simply dropping in a copy of the newsletter, can make a big difference.

Op Shop

While our Op Shop remains closed, not all activity has ceased. Easing of restrictions means we can now meet as a group of more than two people outdoors, so we took the opportunity to pack a load of surplus clothing for shipment to Africa, via our partners at *One Ten Enterprises*. Our small group of volunteers packed 50, 15 kg bags, (that's 750kg of clothing!) on Wednesday morning, to be shipped to the needy in Mozambique. The Op Shop receives a small payment for each bag, we keep all these surplus goods out of landfill, and we have freed up some storage space in our shed.



Your Weekly Offerings

While our church services are on hold, and we can't meet in person, our regular expenses still need to be paid. In addition to the drop in offerings, we are without our hall rental income and the Op Shop remains closed for the foreseeable future. While we have received some assistance from the Federal Stimulus Package and the JobKeeper subsidy, we rely on your weekly offerings to help meet our ongoing expenses. The Church Council encourage the congregation to use direct debit (Giving Direct) if possible, as your mode of regular financial giving; if you would like to set up Giving Direct, please contact treasurer Jeff for details.

We understand that not everyone can do this, and for those of you who normally prefer to make your offerings on the plate, could you continue to put your weekly offerings aside in an envelope, that then can be placed in the collection when normal activities eventually resume.

COVID-19 SYNOD GUIDANCE NOTE 10 - 19 May 2020

With state and territory governments relaxing COVID-19 restrictions, the following guidance addresses the use of church property for services of worship, small groups (Bible Study, prayer gathering, meeting) and public hire. This note is provided for use by all church entities.

With the safety and well-being of our community in mind, Presbytery and Synod leaders agreed on 11 May 2020 that Uniting Churches should not open for public worship or meet face to face in church buildings.

It is anticipated that the effects of COVID-19 will continue to impact our lives for the foreseeable future. In the coming months we will need to make difficult choices between conflicting priorities. We must avoid framing our situation in terms of a false choice between reviving the economy — or our churches — and saving lives. Our commitment to supporting the safety and well-being of people must remain our priority. If we don't continue our efforts to contain the virus, a new wave of infections and deaths could well cause further pain.

All that has been gained in this time of isolation could be quickly lost. Reopening our buildings and gatherings prematurely, even with the practice of social distancing and careful hygiene, could unfairly force the choice between personal health and the desire to re-join the beloved congregation.

Presbytery and Synod resolved that:

☒ Churches should not yet be holding any services of worship in the buildings where Sunday worship regularly occurs. This is in accord with the latest Information Update provided strongly recommending no gatherings in person on church property. ☒ Online worship services and the distribution (by email or Australia Post) of worship resources should continue for the foreseeable future. ☒ Where services of worship are recorded, it is preferable to do the recording from the home, or outdoors, although it is possible to use the church building if all the required social distancing and disinfecting protocols are carefully followed and the numbers permitted on the church property are in accord with current safety protocols. ☒ Bible studies, small groups, meetings, and other church-related groups, regardless of size, should continue to meet online and not face to face. ☒ Funerals and Weddings may continue to be held, with strict adherence to the current Government advice. ☒ Service ministries (food banks, emergency services, and similar services) may continue to operate, providing that they are strictly adhering to safety protocols and only addressing essential needs of the clients who present. ☒ Church Councils and leadership teams should continue to meet online. ☒ Hall hire (such as music lessons, yoga classes etc) should be avoided, apart from serving vulnerable group or providing essential services.

We know that various factors increase the likelihood of in-air transmission. These have all shaped the stance taken:

☒ Singing together as a group, or Congregation is high risk as the aerosols carry infection. ☒ Multiple people touching an object can carry infection. The virus can quickly spread through people touching the same item and then touching their own mouth, nose, or a cut in their skin. ☒ Multiple people in same room regardless of proximity increases the risks. ☒ Close proximity to other people also increases the risk of transmission. ☒ Of particular significance is the fact that each person meeting face to face carries risk of infection from all contact made in the preceding two weeks.

We realise the pain of continued isolation and the deep loss involved in churches remaining closed. Again health and well-being must be our first priority. We ask your patience and support and eagerly look forward to the day we can gather together once again.

Lectionary readings this week:

Acts 1:6-14
Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11
John 17:1-11



DISCIPLESHIP THOUGHT

Christians have often thought about eternal life. What will it be like? When will it happen – at the time of death or some other time? The promise of eternal life has been seen as a reward for hard work here in this life – a prize that must be earned, or perhaps a free gift, but even then a kind of reward at the end of the race. But here Jesus says that eternal life is knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom God sent. So eternal life is not a reward at some future time, but rather the life we find when we encounter God through Jesus Christ. The life that has been shaped by the Gospel is an eternal life in the here and now. This changes everything as we look for eternal qualities and values in who we are and how we live.

PRAYER

To know God is to know eternal life. May God gather us up to be a the people of love who walk this life as a people who have already entered eternal life – for we have.

Go in the knowledge and the peace of God's love. In the name of the three-in-one who is life itself. Amen.

Contact Details

Church email: merimbulaunitingchurch@gmail.com
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Church Council Chairman Colin: 64950961
Church website: www.merimbulaunitingchurch.com.au
Wyndham Congregation: Nancy Grant – 64942127

Sapphire Coast Uniting Church acknowledges the First Peoples of the land on which our congregations meet, work, play and live. We honour them for their continuing custodianship from time beyond remembering. We pay our respects to elders past, present and emerging.

Missed a newsletter? They can be viewed on the Merimbula church website by clicking on the link on the front page, or going through to 'Notices and News' and clicking on 'Lockdown Newsletters'.

Keep safe,
Ed.



Please let us know if you no longer wish to receive these emails