



# Bathurst Uniting Church

Sharing God's love by connecting people to God;  
people to people; and people to community.

Newsletter

Christmas 2022



## Emmanuel God with us

A theme of Matthew's gospel is God with us. It is there in the announcement at the birth of Jesus, that he will be called Emmanuel, which means God with us (Matthew 1:23). It is there at the end of Matthew when Jesus says to the disciples to remember that he, the Son of God, is with them to the end of the age (Matthew 28:16-20).

Another theme running through Matthew is authority. The authority of God is revealed to be given to the Son (Matthew 7:9; 9:6; 21:23-24:27; 24:35; 28:18), who in turn gives that same authority to the church (Matthew 10:1, 10:14-15; 18:18; 28:18-20). Noteworthy, Matthew's gospel is the only gospel that mentions the word 'church' (Matthew 18:17). It is suggestive that when the gospel was written, about 90 CE, the church was well established, and issues of its authority and of the presence of God and the mercy of God, were live.

A further theme in Matthew is the lifting of burdens. It comes from Matthew 11:28-30: "Come to me all you who labour and are over-burdened, and I will give you rest." Brendan Byrne (Brendan Byrne, *Lifting the Burden: Reading Matthew's Gospel in the Church Today*, Strathfield: St Paul's Press, 2004) has suggested that an orientation to reading Matthew is through the lens of Hosea 6:6: "What I [God] want is mercy not sacrifice," which Matthew quotes twice in Matthew 9:13 and again in Matthew 12:7. The idea of mercy rather than sacrifice is expressed in that well-known text of 11:28-30. Mercy is contrasted to what Byrne's calls a "burden-imposing" interpretation of the Torah [Torah: the first five books of the Bible] by the Scribes and the Pharisees. Matthew presents the Torah as "burden-lifting," and gives primacy of attention to the 'weightier matters of the torah: justice, mercy, and peace' (Matthew 23:23). Important background here is that scholars have noted that Matthew's gospel is in five sections, like the five books of the Torah, each section ends with the words of Jesus, "When Jesus finished saying these things . . ." (Matthew 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

On Sunday 11 December, in my sermon, I referred to Paul's second letter to the church in Corinth. In Chapter 5 Paul speaks of the core of the gospel that 'God in Christ was reconciling the world to God's self' (2 Corinthians 5:19). Here reconciliation is an umbrella term that includes the incarnation of Jesus, which we celebrate at Christmas, his crucifixion and death, his resurrection and ascension, and his coming again. It is this full gospel that gives peace with God through Jesus Christ. If we neglect the resurrection and ascension, we turn Christianity into a hard labour for the work of justice, a 'drivenness' usually devoid of peace. Peace with God is a reality when our belief includes both resurrection and ascension, and the coming again of Christ. After Paul makes these statements in his letter to the Corinthians, he then speaks of how those who are reconciled to God, do not have their sins and short-comings held against them, but are given the word or message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19). Paul then spells that out; we are ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20). Ambassadors represent another. They carry a message, which maybe in their own words. The message is not self-generated. It comes from the one who sends, the one whom the ambassador represents. Every Christian is an ambassador of Christ. It seems there is no wriggle room. It is not some

are, and some are not, but all are. How could anyone not want to tell others about the good news they have seen and heard, experienced for themselves and want others to have the same new life?

Returning to Matthew. Jesus sends the disciples out to all nations, all peoples, with the message to make disciples of all peoples, and teach them to observe all that he has commanded them. You can check that out in Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus, here, does not use the notion of ambassador, but it is implied. But what is it that he has commanded? The teaching might include to love God with heart, mind, soul and strength and neighbour as self (Matthew 22:46). It might also include that Jesus is the one who lifts the burdens, rather imposes burdens. Part of that message might include that Jesus, God with us, is with the church in all the places and spaces that the church finds itself as it goes about preaching and teaching, lifting the burdens rather than imposing burdens. Further, the church has the God-given authority to proclaim that message in words and deeds.

Many live with a heavy burden. Some burdens are self-imposed. Many burdens come upon us. Some burdens can be managed. Many burdens cannot. Christmas afternoon and Boxing Day are peak times (the peak is Mother's Day) for calls of people to Lifeline seeking a burden lifted. Suicide rates are also very high at Christmas. Family and Domestic violence, relationship breakdowns are more prevalent at Christmas. Loneliness burdens many at Christmas; some of the loneliest places are in a crowd. Depression is prevalent. It can be difficult for many to see past the tinsel, Christmas trees, stars, lights, nativity scenes to what is behind those symbols. Aphorisms such as love, joy, peace, and hope while good for many, can seem unattainable to the burdened.

It is not just Emmanuel – God with us - that lifts the burden. It is the whole gospel, of God with us in Jesus who came from the Father, lived, crucified for our sins, raised from the dead, ascended into God the Father, and whose return is imminent, who lifts the burdens that bend people over and down. It is not magic. It takes more than a day. Indeed, it takes every day. Every day of getting up, reading the Bible, saying our prayers; praying at lunch time; praying in the evening. Faith in action. Every day of handing our burdens over to Jesus. That is faith in action. It is laying down our burdens to take up life. Faith in action. Some burdens are with us for life. The death of a loved one can't magically be changed how much we wish, or pray, but the burden that might stop us from living can be lifted. Physical impediments and so-called disabilities cannot necessarily be 'fixed.' Some marriages end in divorce. Some illnesses end in death. Many will live with mental illness all their life. But, the burdensomeness of much is relieved by the one who can lift the burden. In lifting the burden, enough, capacity is realised. Life can be lived. God with us embodies mercy for the world. Those who have been drawn into the life of the Trinity can find their lives built into the outreach of that mercy to the world that Jesus 'God with us' embodies.

The tinsel, the star, the lights, the Christmas tree, the baubles, the presents, the carols, the wise people, the shepherds, the heavenly choir, the nativity scene, all point to something beyond themselves. They point to the merciful God with us who lifts our burdens enough to move beyond existing to live life.

Blessings this Christmas,

Rev Keith Hamilton

### ***Christmas Worship***

**Christmas Eve 7pm Carols and Nativity**

**Christmas Day Sunday 25 December**

**9.30am – Rev Keith Hamilton**

**Sunday 1 January 2023 9.30am**

**Rev Keith Hamilton Holy Communion**



## Worship in January will be each Sunday at 9.30am

The 5pm worship will be in recess until Sunday 29 January 2023.

You can join morning worship on Zoom by going to <http://www.bathurstunitingchurch.com.au/> and pressing the purple button.

## What has been happening during Advent?



BUSS Gingerbread House and Train decorating afternoon



**Hamper delivery day** – BUSS combined with other churches and packed and delivered hampers to those in need in the community



Some of the **Monday Morning Bible Study** group celebrating the end of the year.

**Learning about the traditions of Christmas and trying some Christmas craft activities**





BUSS Café Christmas barbecue last week with musical entertainment provided by the new singing group the Music BUSS which has been practising on Saturdays



### WITH LOVE TO THE WORLD REMINDER

If you wish to subscribe to the 2023 issues of “With Love to the World” please complete the form (copy attached) and return to Marion or the church office as soon as possible.

#### PLEASE NOTE

There will be no January newsletter. The next newsletter will be for Sunday 5 February 2023.

As always, urgent matters will be emailed as needed. If you have something urgent please contact me. Ruth

**For good news stories, upcoming events or updates to be added to the church website email Allan - [allanwray@hotmail.com](mailto:allanwray@hotmail.com)**

If you have items for the Newsletter please send them to Ruth at [revaughan@bigpond.com](mailto:revaughan@bigpond.com) by 9pm on the last Wednesday before the first Sunday of the month.

#### Staying Connected

For pastoral support, please contact your Pastoral Partner, or one of the Elders, or email [BUConnect@gmail.com](mailto:BUConnect@gmail.com) and we'll put you in touch with someone.

You can also contact our minister, Rev Keith Hamilton on 0417487446 or email [keith.hamilton.bathurstuc@gmail.com](mailto:keith.hamilton.bathurstuc@gmail.com)



# UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA BATHURST CONGREGATION

## CHURCH COUNCIL ELECTION 2023

Each year we have opportunity to elect new Church Council Members who can be a part of a team who assist with “leading the congregation to a fuller participation in Christ’s mission in the world.’ (UCA regulations)

Those nominated can choose to serve for 1 to 5 years.

The Congregation has resolved that the Church Council consist of 12 elected members. There are 7 members whose terms continue beyond the end of 2022.

Five vacancies exist. two members of the current Council will complete their nominated term in February 2023. They are eligible for re-election if they so desire. They are Lillian Beauchamp and Betty Cowan

Nominations close on Sunday 5th February 2023 with the election of councillors to take place on Sunday 26th February 2022.

\*\*Nominations can be submitted either by:

- Placing in a box which will be provided for completed nomination forms in the Foyer, or
- By submitting Online through the church email – bathurstuca@gmail.com
- A candidate will require at least a majority of votes to be elected.
- All nominees are required to be either a Confirmed Member or Member-in- Association



**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A  
MEMBER OF CHURCH COUNCIL?**

## WHAT DOES THE CHURCH COUNCIL DO?

- Church Council meets on the third Monday of each month from February to December. The meetings are in the Activities Hall and run from 7.00pm – 9.00pm.
- Prior to each meeting, Church Councillors receive emailed reports from each of the Portfolio Groups. These may contain proposals that are then discussed and voted on.
- Membership of Council does not necessarily require specialist expertise (in areas such as administration, finance, property, or IT): such functions are already delegated to the 6 Portfolio Groups.
- The general task of the Church Council is to exercise discernment, decision-making and oversight regarding the total life and mission of the congregation.

## THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH COUNCIL

Sharing with the minister in mission and in the pastoral care and spiritual oversight of the congregation	Nurturing the members and adherents of the congregation in their growth in grace
Managing the financial affairs and the general administration of the congregation	Managing and controlling property in accordance with the regulations

*Regulations 3.1.2(b)*

- The key qualification for Council membership is the willingness to work faithfully with others to discern the will of God and to consider the common good, in support of the mission and ministry of the Congregation in and to the community.
- Church Councillors must be either members of the Uniting Church or Members in Association.

*Please prayerfully consider whether you can contribute.*

*You will be made very welcome and your participation will be much appreciated*

Please speak to any of the current members of Church Council, if you require more information: Brian Mowbray (chairman) Lilian Beauchamp (Secretary) Deb Mina (Treasurer) Keith Hamilton (minister) Ellie Mowbray, Betty Cowan, Brian Cowan, Marion Perry, Julie Fry, Judy Tyson.

### BATHURST UNITING CHURCH COUNCIL NOMINATION FORM – 2023

I am happy to accept nomination as a Church Councillor to the Bathurst Uniting Church Council for a term of

\* \_\_\_\_\_ year(s)

\* Please indicate number of years you are prepared to serve (1 to 5 years)

Name.....

Signed ..... Date .....

Nominated by 2 Confirmed Members or Members-in-Association

Signed ..... Signed .....

Note: If information relating to the duties and responsibilities of Church Councillors/Elders is required, please contact an existing Church Council member.

**WITH LOVE TO THE WORLD**  
**ORDER FORM for 2023 editions**

“With Love to the World” subscriptions are now due. For the coming year, they will cost \$24 each.

If you wish to renew your subscription, please complete the following details below and return it to the church via the following:

- Post or return the form to Bathurst Uniting Church, 140A William Street or PO Box 275, Bathurst NSW 2795 or
- Email it to [BUConnect@gmail.com](mailto:BUConnect@gmail.com) or
- Hand it to Marion Perry in person

Please note that “With Love to the World” is now available as an app. See [www.withlovetotheworld.org.au](http://www.withlovetotheworld.org.au).

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