



Bathurst Uniting Church

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

Newsletter

February 2026

REFLECTION

Everyone is different, everyone is special to God

Recently I read a precis of a book by John Jay. It is titled *Ninette's War: A Jewish story of survival in 1940's France*. The line that grabbed my attention was said by Andrew Trocme, a Calvinist pastor of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon during the Second World War. When the officials of Marshal Petains Vichy government arrived and demanded that the pastor reveal where all the Jews were located in his town, Trocme exclaimed: "We do not know what a Jew is. We only know people." The Calvinists of Le Chambon saved over 2,000 Jews. That in a country where newspapers encouraged Gentiles to denounce Jews, and many revealed their whereabouts. Trocme's actions showed that Calvinists recognised Nazism as unchristian. Many Catholics later joined the subversive work. Paul Remond, Bishop of Nice found ways to hide Jews in convents and smuggled them out of the country. The bishop and other Catholic priests made false baptism certificates to show the SS Jew-hunters, thus saving many lives.

Everyone is different, everyone is special to God.

It is not "rocket science" to observe that we live in a deeply fractured world. Closer to home, a pipe bomb was lobbed into a group of First Nations people on Australia Day; is there anything more un-Australian than that? Across the country people in public office often receive hate-filled comments on social media. Even closer to home, it is alleged a person vented their frustrations with a former partner by killing three people—apparently laughing as they did so. Even closer to home people vent their rage either on the road or in the pub or through social media with words and actions that 'disturb.' And even closer to home, home is not safe for some who if able might flee to homelessness.

Worship Services

9.30 am in the church

8 February David and Sharynne

15 February Rev Keith Hamilton

22 February Rev Keith Hamilton

1 March Anthony - Holy Communion

If you want to join on Zoom go to <https://www.bathurstunitingchurch.com.au/> and click on the purple button

'Sunday @ 5'

At 5pm – contemporary, informal, all ages worship in the Activities Hall.

Music practice is at 4.30pm. If you play an instrument come along!

Maybe it is not ok to be different, and maybe not everyone is special to God?

But did Christ come only for a few good people? How does that sit with Jesus (Mark 10:17-22) saying to the rich young man that only God is good? How does it sit with Paul saying to the church in Rome (Romans 5:8) "while we were still sinners, Christ died for all." Maybe God thinks that everyone is of such value that the Father, through the energy of the Holy Spirit and the humble acceptance of Mary, sent the Son, Jesus, for everyone. If that is so, then differences might be a gift of God, and perhaps we are all special to God. Maybe.

The letter to the church in Ephesus (1:4) speaks of the church as "one body and one Spirit." What does one body mean? It can't mean we are all the same! It seems to me that there is such a thing as false peace.

A so-called peace where things are smoothed over, and differences ignored, and people's voices quashed. But that is not peace; and the body is not one. It seems to me peace is when people with differences – different opinions, ideas etc, learn to value the differences and find ways to be together. Certainly, the Christian belief that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, suggests in God there are differences and yet communion. The body of Christ across the world is one, yet within and between there are differences.

The second part of that verse, one body, one Spirit, speaks into the discussion. The one Spirit has given different gifts so that the church has what is required to be the church. It also suggests something additional. Ephesians 4:2-3, following the strong encouragement to live in a manner of the high calling to be one, says this: "With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Drawing on the Spirit, the church is called to live humbly, be gentle, be patient, bear with one another. That is not seeking a false peace but learning to live with one another. Being in relationship, listening to the each other's story. "Everyone has a story" was Fred Anderson's aphorism when in ministry as coordinator and support worker at Meals Plus – a daycentre for people doing it tough. Perhaps taking the time to listening to someone's story is both accepting that everyone is different, and everyone is special to God.

I wonder then not only about the witness of the church doing those things, of one body, one Spirit, respecting each other as ok to be different and celebrating everyone is special to God, but what if all the church did that with everyone in society - at home, at work, at school, at leisure, at the shops, at any and everywhere - might that make a "non-rocket science" difference.

Nearly fifty years ago (June 6, 1966) the late Robert Kennedy gave a speech in South Africa during the time of Apartheid. He said a line that has become famous. "each time a person stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others or strikes out against injustice . . . they send forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centres of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest wall of oppression and resistance.

What difference might it make if every Christian began to treat everyone as different and everyone as special to God? Naïve optimism or maybe a ripple of hope? What do you think?

Blessings

Keith Hamilton

30 January 2026

Congratulations Judy Brooke awarded Order of Australia Medal

Congratulations to **Judy Brooke**, Bathurst Uniting Church's member, friend and organist of over 60 years who has been awarded an Order of Australia Medal in the 2026 Australia Day Honours List. Judy was nominated "for services to the Bathurst community".

Judy has been the Bathurst Uniting Church's organist since 1962 (64 years) and her dedication was recognised with recital, cake and a plaque at the 150th celebration of our 1874 William Davidson organ in 2024. You can watch a YouTube video of Judy and the organ here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Clrp6NB7CEE>



Here is a part of Judy's story written by the Western Advocate in 2024

"THE chronicle of Bathurst's organists begins in the 1800s ... However, it was in 1965 that Judy Brooke took the reins, marking the beginning of a transformative era. Judy's journey began long before her official appointment as the church's organist. Born into a musical household, her mother, Elsie Allibone, was a gifted pianist who nurtured Judy's love for music. While Judy credits her mother for inspiration, she embarked on formal organ lessons under the guidance of London-trained organist Tom Leah. Her marriage to engineering student Peter Brooke led her to Oberon and later to Bathurst, where she balanced the demands of raising three children with her passion for music.

Despite a hiatus of three-and-a-half years, Judy's return to playing marked the beginning of a prolific period. She not only graced the keys of the organ but also showcased her piano skills, accompanying performances across Bathurst. Judy's love for church music, instilled from childhood, became a guiding force. Her devotion to the organ was evident as she served as deputy organist under Rod Wells in 1962, eventually assuming the role of organist in 1966. Balancing her duties with a job as a secretary with the Department of Education, Judy became a fixture at the church, playing for two Sunday services, weddings, and funerals. In those early years, Judy faced occasional criticism, a challenge she overcame with sage advice from her mother: "You don't play for the people, you play for God." This perspective not only fortified her resilience but also shaped her approach to the instrument as a vessel for spiritual expression. The Bathurst organ, a Davidson instrument like the one she learned on with Mr Leah in Burwood, became an extension of Judy's faith. Beyond the mechanical act of playing, she viewed her role as a conduit, translating her devotion into melodies that resonated through the church's sacred spaces.

As the years passed, Judy's impact extended beyond the walls of the church. Her accompaniment of school choirs, her involvement in various musical events, and her unwavering dedication to her craft made her a beloved figure in the Bathurst musical community. Judy Brooke's story is not just a testament to her musical prowess; it's a narrative of devotion, resilience and a deep-seated connection with an instrument that has witnessed the ebb and flow of time. In her own words, she plays not merely for an audience but for something greater - an enduring expression of faith and a melody that transcends the ages."

Congratulations to Judy Brooke OAM – we are very proud of you

CHURCH COUNCIL ELECTION

The election of Church Council leaders will take place on Sunday 22 February at both services.

The Congregation has resolved that the Church Council consist of 12 elected members. As there are 8 members whose terms continue beyond February 2026, there are 4 vacancies to be filled.

Those who have nominated are

- Andrew
- Anthony
- David
- Judy
- Maree

A candidate will require at least a majority of votes to be elected.

GIRLS' NIGHT OUT

Tuesday February 10, 6.00pm

at

Vanilla Bean, 109 Bentinck Street.

Please contact Kaye or Maureen

by **Sunday February 8** if you wish to attend.

It is always a great fun night out with lots of talk and laughter and good food of course!

In fairness to the restaurant, bookings are essential.



KUCA NEEDS YOUR HELP

Kuca is a great outreach to our young people from 5 to 11 years. It is held every second Friday 5pm to 7pm during school terms.

The children who come talk to their friends at school and bring them along to enjoy the games, food, devotions, and craft.

We are asking for volunteers to help in the kitchen to provide a healthy meal. It doesn't need to be a full-time commitment. We need several people we can call on to help when the regular volunteers are away or other times when there is a need. Of course you would also be welcome and help regularly. We have been a team of three, up until now when are down to two. Hoping with prayerful consideration you can join our Team. Rocelyn

Save the Date for

The Annual Church Retreat Date: 21 March 2026

Time: 10.00 am to 3.00pm

Where: Perthville Community Hall

Guest Speaker/Presenter: Denise Wood, Chairperson Macquarie Darling Presbytery

BUSS UPDATE

Safer parking space

You may have noticed the new fencing in the carpark. This is the long-awaited Safer Parking area for women and children. We still have some lighting and video cameras to go but it is basically ready to be used. We are very excited that we have finally got the fence up after waiting a long time to raise the money and then get the fencer to come and put it up.

Bathurst Regional Homeless Coalition (BRHC)

It was very pleasing to see the outcome of BRHC working together. Over the Christmas break Homes.NSW, working with others managed to find housing, shared housing or temporary accommodation in Motels for 12 of the people sleeping rough at Berry Park. This is not the end of homelessness in Bathurst but is good example of organisations working together to achieve results.

Excursion to the Historical Museum

On Wed 28th 15 people from BUSS had a great excursion to the Historical museum. It also provoked some stories from our people about local family history. We finished the very hot day by having an ice cream from Annies.

If you'd like to see more of the things that BUSS is doing go to our facebook



page <https://www.facebook.com/BathurstBUSS/> which is regularly updated with information and photos.

LAY PREACHER MASTERCLASS – 2026

Growing Skill. Deepening Faith. Strengthening Connection.

The Macquarie Darling Presbytery invites **new and experienced Lay Preachers** to participate in a **Lay Preacher Masterclass**, commencing in **February 2026**.

This masterclass is designed to:

- Strengthen preaching skills for today's context
- Engage deeply with the **Revised Common Lectionary (RCL)**
- Build collegial connection across our geographically large and diverse presbytery
- Support both **emerging and veteran lay preachers** in confident, faithful proclamation

Format

- **Fortnightly sessions (via Zoom)**
- Choose **one** of two streams:
 - **Tuesday mornings** – 9:30am
 - **Thursday evenings** – 7:30pm
- Sessions are aligned with the **RCL readings for the following week**

What to Expect

Each session will:

1. Begin with a **focused skill or preaching resource** (e.g. sermon structure, working with scripture, illustration, theological framing, delivery, contemporary tools)
2. Move into a **guided exploration of the three RCL readings**
3. Encourage shared learning, discussion, and mutual support

The emphasis is not on producing “model sermons” but on **developing transferable skills**, confidence, and a shared preaching culture across the Presbytery.

Who Should Attend?

- Newly authorised or exploring lay preaching
- Long-serving lay preachers seeking refreshment and renewed confidence
- Lay preachers serving in rural, small, ageing, or multi-congregation contexts

Delivery

- **Online via Zoom** Accessible from anywhere in the Presbytery

Commencing: 10 February 2026

Registrations / Enquiries: martinl@nswact.uca.org.au

Come to learn. Stay to connect. Preach with confidence and hope.

Staying Connected

For pastoral support, please contact your Pastoral Partner, or one of the Elders, or email 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

Mowing Roster

7 February

Henry & James

21 February

Peter

PLEASE NOTE

The newsletter email address is bathurstucanews@gmail.com. Please send items by 9pm on the last Wednesday of the month. Please send news or information for the website to allanwray@hotmail.com



For the work and mission of
Bathurst Uniting Support Services

All donations and gifts over \$2.00
are Tax Deductible



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Bathurst Uniting Church

