

SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH

SHEPPARTON RURAL CLUSTER



The building is open!

NEWS DECEMBER 13 2020

MINISTERS

Rev Loni Vaitohi 5822 4602 0449 504 228

Rev Joan Fisher, Minister in Assoc

Rev Glenys Gill, Supply Minister

Pastoral Care Convenor Shirley Marven

Church 4805 1120

Website sheppartonuc.org.au

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SUNDAY DECEMBER 13 Advent 3

Praying Together Mt Beauty Alpine Regional Resource Ministry

Readings Is 61.1-4,8-11 Ps 126 1Thess 5.16-24 John 1.6-8,19-28

Worship Revd Loni Vaitohi Duty Elder Jen Shields

The service will be in the church - but also live on Zoom, or by phone, 9.30am

READINGS - DECEMBER

Dec 20 2Sam 7.1-11,16 Lk 1.46b-55 Rom 16.25-27 Luke 26-38

Dec 25 Is 62.6-12 Ps 97 Titus 3.4-7 Luke 2. (1-7), 8-20

Dec 27 Is 61.10- 62.3 Ps 148 Gal 4.4-7 Luke 2.22-40

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of the region, the Peoples of the Yorta Yorta Nations, and pay our respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH begins Sunday December 13!

Sunday will be a joyous occasion as people can gather together in the church and narthex for worship! COVID requirements will be observed, so come earlier, to allow time for electronic signing in - yes, everyone! And hand sanitising. And sitting, differently spaced. All details are in the Church Council Report and the Minister's Pastoral Letter.

The service will be zoomed as usual for those not able or ready to return.

SHEPPARTON WORSHIP ONLINE

Joining in to Zoom via the phone

Step 1: To join the meeting via a Phone call please dial one of the following phone numbers: 03 7018 2005 or 0

Step 2: when prompted enter the meeting code on the Zoom invitation.

The Meeting Code for December 13 is 984 5020 8780#

Step 3: you will asked if you are the meet participant. Just press #

Step 4: when prompted enter the passcode on the Zoom invitation, which will also change each week.

The Passcode for December 13 is 396 461#

ADVENT STUDIES *Hammer on Anvil* Week 3 *Anticipating*

There is still time to join an Advent Studies group.

Tuesday 15, 3.00pm at the church, in a group facilitated by Loni. or online

Wednesday 16. 7.00pm, online

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Thursday 17, Blue Christmas Service 5.00pm

Thursday 24 Christmas Eve Children's and Family Service 7.00pm

Friday 25 Christmas Day Traditional Service 9.30am

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE Thursday December 17, 5.00pm

How can we sing a joyous song, share in the 'merry Christmas' greetings, when our hearts are heavy with pain and grief, loss of loved ones, jobs, relationships, health, or separation from family members...

Blue Christmas services recognise pain and loss. They acknowledge that the story of the first Christmas is not really a happy one: birth of a Child to parents far from home, poor, in borrowed emergency accommodation; it's a story about life in the real world of hurt and loss, far from the Christmas card versions of the Nativity story.

Join us for a quiet, reflective service, sharing with others also feeling a little blue. Come to find comfort, to find hope...

REPORT OF CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING DECEMBER 9

The Church Council held its final meeting for 2020, on Wednesday, 9 of December. As in past years we gathered with our families for a meal together, though this year it was a BYO Everything meal to comply with the Covid-19 regulations.

Rev Loni Vaitohi commended the members for their work during this difficult year and led devotions by asking us 'to say in one sentence, what Christmas means for you'

Pastoral joys and concerns were shared, noting particularly the number of folk experiencing health issues at this time. Great joy was expressed for the Advent packages prepared and delivered by the Children and Family Committee – a total of 28 families (64 children) from the Mooroopna, Dookie and Shepparton congregations, received the packages. The packages included an Advent journal to record the story of Christmas from Luke's Gospel, craft and paper based activities for each week of Advent, an Advent Kindness calendar and a chart detailing the meaning of the various Christmas tree decorations, along with some extra decorations for the family Christmas tree.

The main piece of business was to approve the proposal of the Worship Committee: *The Worship Group recommends to Church Council that Shepparton U.C. returns to face-to-face worship from Sunday Dec. 13th [Advent 3]. This would include Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Zoom worship will continue to be offered.* The proposal was approved by consensus and celebrated with joy.

The further relaxation of the rules announced last Sunday allows us to apply the **'2 square metre rule' if electronic record keeping is used.** If our record keeping continues to be paper based we have to apply the '4 metre rule'. Loni has applied for, and received, a QR code for Shepparton Uniting Church, which is displayed on the front door of the Church. Those who have mobile phones with a camera or a 'QR' app will be able to record their attendance via the QR Code.

As a number of folk do not have phones with this facility, the Church Council agreed to purchase a Samsung Tablet to allow us to manage the electronic record keeping process. DO NOT WORRY if this sounds all too hard: a number of extra 'welcomers' will be there to help us through the process and we are assured that it is quicker and easier than writing our names down! All that is required is your first name and phone number to be entered into the programme and it is done. Following these processes will allow us to have up to 92 people in the

Church and 50 in the Narthex, remembering that we still have to socially distance with regard to seating.

In other business:

*we agreed that we will recommence morning tea after worship from the first Sunday in February, regulations permitting.

*an application to use Property Sales Proceeds funds to install air conditioning into the Old Church and the Hall has been submitted to the Synod. The application has the full support from the Presbytery Property and Finance Committee.

Third Sunday of Advent

The joy of returning home

Today there are more than 60,000 Sri Lankan refugees in India. With the civil war over, many wish to return home to live in peace and freedom, and help rebuild their nation. Act for Peace's local partner, with your support, is helping returnees rebuild their lives by providing training and livelihood support to help families earn an income. **Please give today.**

CALL: 1800 025 101 VISIT: actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl

The Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. ABN 65 679 931 088

PASTORAL PRAYERS

Remember those who have undergone surgery and those waiting for surgery, those who are ill or convalescing, and those restored to good health. Specially remember those who are beginning a new programme of medical care. Pray for those in respite and those who have returned home. The WCC Ecumenical Prayer Cycle this week invites prayers for China, Hong Kong, Macau. In the Presbytery, this week we pray for Mt Beauty. The Uniting Church Assembly invites our prayers for our Pacific neighbours whose future depends on the responsible environmental stewardship of other nations - our global mission partners in the United Church of Christ in the US and the United Church of Canada. May we share our faith generously to build each other up in love. - a world free from gender-based violence

OFFERING ENVELOPES available at the Church

CROSSLIGHT

The December edition is available. Phone Joan 5812 9320 for copies reserved for those not attending the church service. No calendars this year!

WITH LOVE TO THE WORLD

With Love to the World is now available as an App, which you can obtain from your usual app store. Hard copies will cost \$24 for the year.

Joan will contact you in the next few weeks to see which version you will use in 2021. The first copy is due in February - hard copy payment will be due when you receive that copy.

And remember, new subscribers are extremely welcome! Just let Joan know you're interested.

1000 DRESSES PROJECT

A couple of months ago, ABC News had a brief note about this scheme, originating in Fitzroy Crossing, WA. Some of you may have heard about it on FaceBook. At the Waranga service a fortnight ago the minister, Brian Spencer, interviewed Mia Donnet-Jones, who runs the Project, online, during the service. Fitzroy Crossing has only one clothes shop, stocked and priced for people on stations rather than Indigenous Grandmothers. The Project invites people to send plus size dresses. Mia was standing with dresses from Wangaratta Uniting Church. Brian interviewed Helen Collins who runs St Stephen's Op Shop Wodonga, and had just sent a pack. I have the mail and freight addresses and have given them to Ray and Judy. My parcel is on its way. Would you like to help? Just ask me for the address. Joan

PS Mia has received 1300 dresses from all over Australia!

PASTORAL LETTER FROM THE REVD LONI VAITOHI

Dear friends in Christ,

I hope that you and your family are well and that you are able to meet your loved ones face to face after the Covid 19 restrictions had been eased.

At its meeting on the 9th December, the Church Council approved the proposal from the Worship Committee that Shepparton Uniting Church return to face to face worship starting this coming Sunday the 13th December.

This return to face to face worship is a return to a 'new normal' in the way we meet.

The Church Council will put in place all that is required under Covid safe requirements from the DHS and the Vic/Tas Synod to make sure the safety of our members and those who may attend our Christmas services.

This includes electronic registering. It means that when you arrive for the services, you will find posters at the main entrance from the car park with a code. That code can be scanned onto your mobile phone. If you do not have a phone, or new to scanning with your mobile camera, don't panic as there will be a person at the main entrance with an iPad to sign you in and/or assist with your registration.

Because of the use of electronic registration, we would be able to accommodate more people in our services than previously allowed through signing the book. This allows us to welcome more than a hundred people into the church complex (including the narthex, the halls and the Sunday School room) for worship at a particular time.

This really is good news for us in the Shepparton Uniting Church.

Apart from the excitement of the Christmas season, I hope you are also excited in gathering face to face for the first time since the 'lock down'.

In fellowship,
Loni.