

SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH

WITH DOOKIE UNITING CHURCH



NEWS JANUARY 1, 2023

NEW YEAR'S DAY

MINISTERS

Rev Loni Vaitohi

Rev Kerrie Needham

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Sick Leave

Rev

Rev Glenys

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SUNDAY, JANUARY 1 Rev Kerrie Needham HC

Readings Is 63.7-9 Ps 148 Heb 2.10-18 Matt 2. 13-23

DOOKIE 9.30am Joan McRae

SHEPPARTON WORSHIP 9.30AM

Worship online www.youtube.com/user/SheppartonUniting

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

THE PRESIDENT'S NEW YEAR PRAYER

God of time and space, God beyond all that is
As we stand on the threshold between the end of one year
And the beginning of a new year
Grant us the gift of self-reflection
That we might review our year with honesty.
Help us confess those things that were
That took us away from the things of your kingdom
That did not reflect your great love for us and all creation
Or denied the image of God in the other
Help us give thanks for the times we have followed the way of Christ
For the acts of kindness, mercy and compassion we experienced and
offered
Our participation in acts of justice and repair of creation.

God of time and space, God beyond all that is
Travel with us into the New Year as you have been with us in the old one
That You might grant us courage to live freely, following the way of Jesus
Generosity to love more abundantly
And hope to sustain our living for justice and peace
We pray in the name of Christ, our wisdom and hope. **Amen**
Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the Uniting Church in Australia

GREETING FROM KERRIE

Hello, The past week has been so full of wondrous things. Our Interactive Christmas was well received. Thank you to all who helped set up and organise the service, and Cam for transferring the viewing into the foyer for us. I ended up telling the story three times as people arrived at different times. It was fun. I got to wear the vest my daughter made me for Christmas too.

Christmas Day saw a joyous celebration of Loni's news that his cancer size had decreased by 50% and he will be going for round six for treatment. You could feel the joy and prayerfulness of the congregation at this news. We all enjoyed a mix of English and Tongan singing, and I had tears of joy as I heard a Tongan choir again. Thank you to Loni's family for giving us that blessing.

Don and I had a joyous Christmas with family visiting. We celebrated a Christmas dinner together for the first time in years. We explored a few new places to eat: the SAM gallery café; the café near the windmill ... and the chocolate apple shop. We visited the swimming complex and did other

touristy things. We got to play Barbies with the youngest granddaughter and Cards against Humanity (FAMILY EDITION) with the oldest.

The house will be a little quieter tonight, and there won't be a little knock at the door in the morning, with a request for watching Play School together. But there'll be a next time – and what a blessing it is.

Bless you all as we walk towards a new year.
Kerrie and Don

JESUS THE REFUGEE and REFUGEES TODAY

Matthew 2.13-23 tells the dramatic story of the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt as refugees, escaping the wrath of King Herod who saw himself threatened by a Baby and ordered the execution of all children under 2. The Egyptian Church treasures the memories of being a safe place for this family.

In his 2007 hymn *Jesus entered Egypt*, Adam Tice closes verse 1 with the query: 'Was there room and welcome for this refugee?'

Shepparton has a history of welcoming refugees, some of whom are members of this congregation – Uzembe Byamasu and Jeannette Mwavita, (Congo, then Tanzania for a decade) in August 2006 and their children; Emmanuel Katenda, from Congo, then years in Namibia) and others who have moved on, like Maulidi Mukasa and his youngest children, twins Fitina and Neema, and Monga (August 2006); his wife Namulika, now worshipping at the Baptist Church. Members of the former Wesley congregation will recall the great excitement and joy when Neema, eight years old, who had been separated from her family for six years, was found through the Red Cross and brought to Shepparton from Kenya by then Principal of St Brendan's Primary School, in 2008. (Fitina has been a case manager for Uniting in Shepparton since her university graduation; Neema graduated in nursing almost a year ago and works at the GV, but still does shifts at Tarcoola – part of her deep commitment to 'give back'.

At World Refugee Day 2021 there were
- 89.3 million forcibly displaced people Of these
- 69% were from five countries, including Syria and South Sudan – Syria has the highest number of refugees(6.7M). 83% of refugees are hosted in low and middle income countries. *UNHCR June 2022*

In Ukraine there are over 100 million refugees.
One in every 78 people world-wide have been forced to flee from their homes Global warming could create 150 million climate refugees by 2050 (a 2010 prediction). It has already begun in some Pacific Island countries like Kiribati.

PASTORAL PRAYERS

We remember Emily, Eve, Nola Smith

All with Covid, or Long Covid; those isolating – the greatly increasing numbers in Victoria and locally. *The Presbytery* prays for Broadford. *The WCC* prays for the lands and peoples of Iran, Iraq and Syria. All refugees and displaced people

Loni, Moti and the family

EPIPHANY JANUARY 6

Readings Is 60. 1-5 Ps 72. 1-7, 10-14 Ephes 3. 1-12 Lk 2.1-14

Epiphany is a significant church festival. It was originally the day when the Eastern Church celebrated the Incarnation (or Nativity) and also the Baptism of Jesus. The Orthodox Churches still celebrate Christmas on January 6 – but you may have noted that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church celebrated on December 25 this year, to separate itself from the Russian Orthodox Church, given the present conflict. The Western Church (us!) has taken the Epiphany revelation of Jesus to the world at the visit of Wise Men as part of the Christmas story. You may be interested to check for references to Christmas in the news on January 6. Greeks in Shepparton will celebrate then; Macedonians, who worship at St Augustine's Church, may have shared Christmas with us.

REV LONI VAITOHI

On Christmas Day, Loni shared that the cancer has shrunk considerably to the point that the oncologist is confident to move to round 5 and 6 of chemo. Since then, I have completed round 5 and round 6 will begin in January. The icing on the cake would be radiation therapy, based on the decision of the specialist.

If all goes well after all those treatments, I will be moved to a six-monthly tests/scan.

This is great news indeed and a testimony to the professionalism of the staff at the cancer treatment centre, the power of prayer - corporately, privately and the great support from the church family, colleagues and friends.

I am deeply grateful for all you have done and I will meet with the Church Council soon to talk about the future from here. *Loni*

READINGS JANUARY 8

Baptism of Jesus Is 42.1-9 Ps 29 Acts 10. 34-43 Mt 3. 13-17

CHURCH OFFERINGS – ELECTRONIC GIVING

Please contact us for further information