

OUR NEWS

5th March 2023

Our Vision

A Community Transforming Lives



Our Values

Grace,
Inclusion,
Dignity,
Faith and Hope

Congregational life at Westmead & Parramatta,
Hospitality Services at 175 Hotel and Wesley Apartments
Meals Plus Services providing for those in need across the
Parramatta LGA

Parramatta Mission acknowledges that all of our work takes
place on the land of traditional owners.

We pay respect to the original custodians of the land on
which we gather, and acknowledge their elders past and
present, and their emerging leaders.

WEEKLY REFLECTION

Lent 2A, 2023

John 3 1-17

Where the Wind Blows

Debie Thomas

John 3:16 was the first Bible verse I memorized as a child. In Sunday School, I learned that it's essentially Christianity 101 — a simple formula for faith, a handy evangelism tool, and a perfect summary of the Good News. Over the years, I've seen the verse displayed on billboards, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and cross-stitch samplers. Martin Luther called it "the heart of the Bible, the Gospel in miniature."



And so it is. On this second Sunday of Lent, as we consider Jesus's lengthy, nighttime encounter with Nicodemus, John 3:16 jumps out of their perplexing dialogue for its efficiency and pithiness. In just twenty-seven words, the verse describes a loving God, a cherished world, a self-giving Son, a universal invitation, a deliverance from death, and a promise of eternal life. Christianity in a nutshell, right?

Well, I'm not so sure. The problem is not in the verse itself, but in what the Church so often does with it. In our well-intentioned efforts to make the Gospel message accessible and palatable, we Christians sometimes reduce salvation to a soundbite, forgetting that when Jesus originally spoke the words to Nicodemus — a Pharisee, a member of the Sanhedrin, and likely one of the more erudite men of his day — his listener found Jesus's words incomprehensible. "How can these things be?" Nicodemus asked in astonishment, when Jesus spoke to him in the obscure and metaphorical language of birth, flesh, water, and spirit. But Jesus, unfazed by the Pharisee's confusion, refused to simplify his explanation. If he intended to "save" Nicodemus quickly and easily that night, he failed. What the seeker experienced was not salvation; it was bewilderment.

If Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus is representative of God's preferred "evangelism style," than I have to wonder: what does my more formulaic approach to Christianity leave out? Am I so invested in keeping the faith cozy and comfortable that I minimize its weirdness? Its otherness? Its offensiveness? Jesus had no problem leaving Nicodemus confused and muddled. He was in no hurry to get Nicodemus to sign on the dotted line. The Spirit "blows where it chooses," Jesus said. The Spirit cannot be caged or contained. Which means the journey of faith and the workings of salvation can't be caged or contained, either. When we speak of God's kingdom, we are in a realm of deep mystery. It's okay to be surprised. It's okay to be stricken. It's okay to take our time. After all, what Jesus was offering Nicodemus was not a tune-up, or a few minor tweaks to an already near-perfect life; it was a brand new life. A new birth. A fresh, down to the foundations beginning. What newborn enters the world without birth pangs, shock, disorientation, or pain? Downright bewilderment isn't the exception in a birth story; it's

the rule. If we don't find Christianity at least a little bit confusing, then perhaps it's not Christianity we're practicing.

As I sit with Nicodemus's baffled reaction to Jesus, here's what I'm asking myself: what does my glib reading of John 3:16 prevent me from seeing about God, Christ, faith, sin, and salvation? Do I lean too hard on the importance of individual belief, and forget the stunning truth that God loves and longs for all of creation – quite apart from my belief or unbelief? Do I treat Jesus's words as a litmus test, using it not to communicate God's all-encompassing compassion and mercy, but to threaten unbelievers with God's judgment? Do I allow my interpretation to flatten and distort the meaning of "belief," reducing its nuance and complexity to mere intellectual assent? What does it mean, after all, to say, "I believe in Jesus?" Why is "belief," of all things, so important to God? Growing up, I was taught that being a Christian means affirming the right things. To accept Jesus into my heart, to be "born again," was to agree to a set of doctrines about who Jesus is and what he accomplished through his death and resurrection. To enter into orthodox faith was to believe that certain theological statements about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the human condition, the Bible, and the Church, were true. When we spoke of "growing in the faith," what we meant was that we were honing our doctrinal commitments. To be a mature Christian was to have one's theological ducks in a row. This honing, moreover, was a serious business. As a teenager, I watched congregations split up over the legitimacy of infant baptism over "believer's" baptism. I knew Christians who considered speaking in tongues a litmus test for faith. I heard pastors fight over whether the Communion table should be open (available to all) or closed (reserved for baptized members of a particular faith community). I heard others argue over the most nitpicky details concerning the "endtimes." Would God take his children to heaven before the "great tribulation?" Or would they have to hang around and endure the birth pains of a new kingdom?

For the earnest and well-meaning people involved, none of these questions were silly or peripheral; they cut to the heart of what it means to be Christian. Getting the theological particulars right was paramount — what else could faith entail, if not fidelity to the correct particulars?

I fear that I fall into the same trap when I speak glibly of John 3:16 as "Christianity in a nutshell." "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." It sounds so gorgeously precise, so deceptively simple. But does all of Christianity really come down to my accepting certain propositions about Jesus to be factual? To be true? Is that really it? For me, this way of believing — this way of defining faith as an intellectual assent to precisely codified doctrines — has fallen apart. Not because I can't assent, but because my assenting, in and of itself, hasn't fostered anything close to the meaningful relationship I desire to have with God. If anything, my intellectual assent has functioned as a smokescreen. A distraction. A substitute.

In her 2013 book, *Christianity after Religion*, historian Diana Butler Bass points out that the English word "believe" comes from the German "belieben" — the German word for love. To believe is not to hold an opinion. To believe is to treasure. To hold something beloved. To give my heart over to it without reservation. To believe in something is to invest it with my love.

This is true in the ancient languages of the Bible as well. When the writers of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament wrote of faithfulness, they were not writing about an intellectual surrender to a factual truth. They were writing about fidelity, trust, and

confidence. As they saw it, to believe in God was to place their full confidence in him. To throw their whole hearts, minds, and bodies into his hands.

The fact is, I can't think of any significant human relationships in which doctrine matters more than love and trust. So why should my relationship with God be any different?

What does it mean to believe in Jesus? To hold onto him? To trust him with my life? For Nicodemus, it meant starting anew, letting go of all he thought he understood about the life of faith. It meant being "born again," becoming a newborn, vulnerable, hungry, and ready to receive reality in a brand new way. It meant coming out of the darkness and risking the light. None of this could be reduced to an altar call or a litmus test. The work of trusting Jesus was mind-bending, soul-altering work — it was hard, and it took time, and it involved setbacks, fears, and disappointments. No wonder Nicodemus walked away baffled that first night. Jesus was calling him to so much more than a rote recitation of the sinner's prayer; he was calling him to fall in love, and stay in love. Why is belief important to God? Because love is important to God. To believe is to be-love.

"Christianity in a nutshell" sounds catchy, but in the end, I don't think it exists. I also don't think easy answers or efficient soundbites will serve us well during this season of Lent. After all, we're in the desert now. The wilderness. Wandering, thirsting, yearning, waiting, and listening go with the territory.

Yes, John 3:16 is a beautiful passage of scripture, and we are right to recite it, memorize it, and cherish it. But the way of faith it points to is as vast and mysterious as all the workings of a human heart reaching out for God's. That's why we can trust it; its challenge corresponds to reality. No love as rich, demanding, costly, and free as God's love for us can ever be reduced to a formula.

Debie Thomas
Journey with Jesus

Foster your faith this week

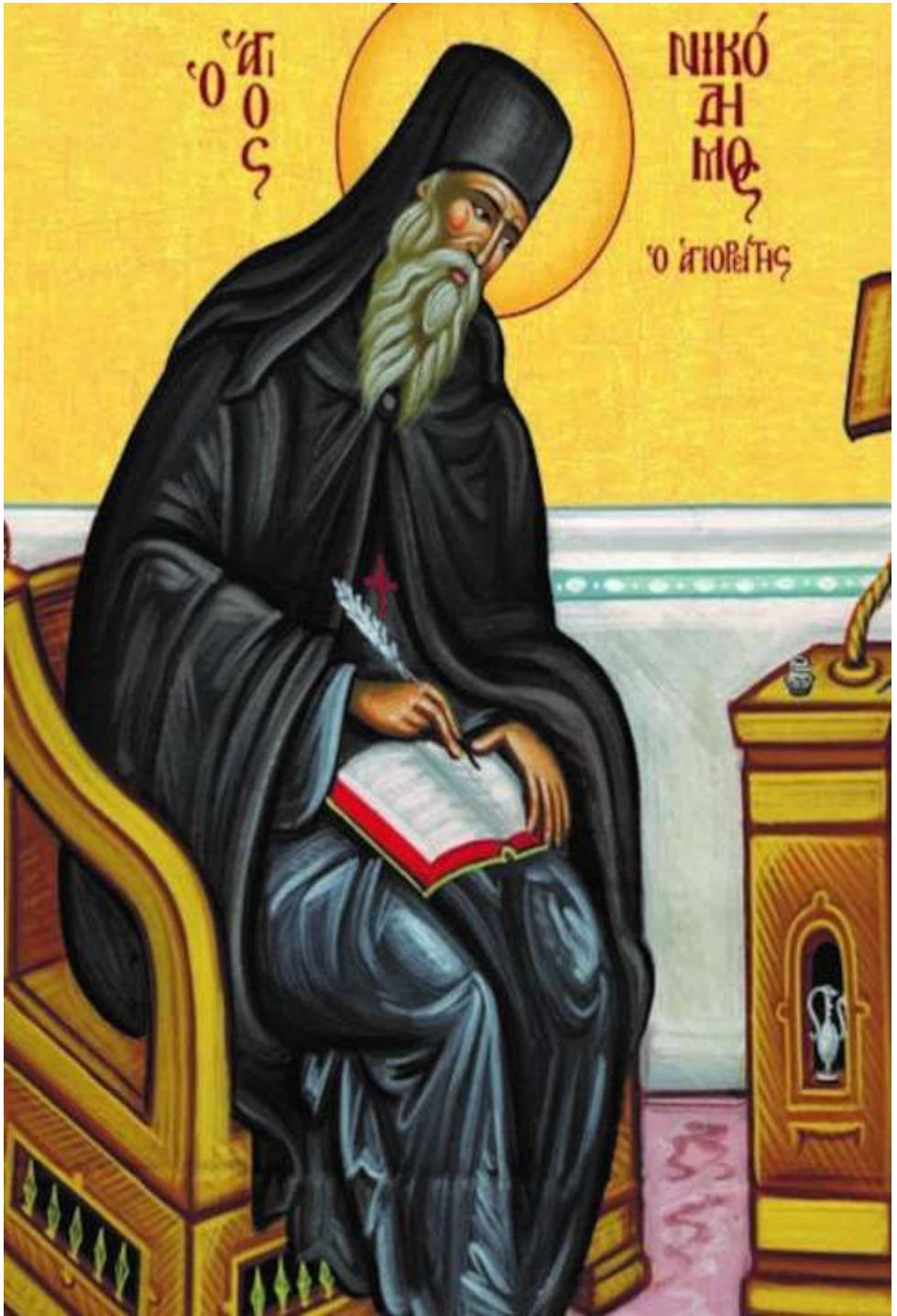
Gn 12:1-4a

Ps 121

Rom 4:1-5, 13-17

Jn 3:1-17 or

Mt 17: 1-9



Leigh Memorial Congregation

WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY

This **Sunday, 5 March**, we'll be gathering for worship Onsite + Zoom at Leigh Memorial at 9.30am with Pastor Sarah Bishop, inc. Communion. *All Welcome.*

REACHING OUT TO THE WIDER WORLD: LENT EVENT 2023 – “PRAY, LIVE SIMPLY & GIVE...”



A message from UnitingWorld for 40 days of prayer, simplicity & generosity: “Our world is hurting. Ongoing conflicts, rising poverty and hunger + the climate crisis... We want to make a difference, but it can be hard to know where to start. Lent is an opportunity to train our hearts towards compassion, generosity and loving our neighbours – to focus on what each of us can do to make a difference. Join us for 40 days of

prayer, simplicity and generosity for our hurting world....This year, \$25 can provide nutritious food to kids in Timor-Leste, \$50 can give pigs to a family in Indonesia, \$100 can provide a job for a person with a disability in Sri Lanka, \$500 can send a girl to school in India and \$1000 can supply clean water to a village in Papua New Guinea.” Please note that \$100 of the \$250 total raised at our recent Leigh Memorial Pancakes fundraiser morning tea has already been donated to Lent Event. The balance of funds raised by the congregation has been donated to World Vision’s Turkiye-Syria earthquake appeal. To make personal donations to Lent Event 2023, or obtain further information about the program, please check the following link:

<https://donate.unitingworld.org.au/event/lent-event/home>

PASTORAL MESSAGE

Our prayers remain with all those in need of additional support at this time, including members who are unwell, grieving or requiring special care.

NB: Contact details for the pastoral team are in the newsletter.

NB: Rev Vladimir will be on leave between 22 March and 4 May.

WELCOME REV GEOFF

Rev Geoff Smith is commencing his role with the PCUC this month, and will be conducting his first 9.30am service at Leigh Memorial on Sunday 19 March. Everyone is warmly invited to come and meet Geoff – and to join us for morning tea after worship. Geoff has had 15 years of experience as a minister in the UCA, with previous appointments at Galston UC and Warnervale/Toukley.

NB: Diary date – Geoff’s induction as the PCUC’s Lead Minister will be taking place at 2.00pm on Sunday 30th April at the Centre for Ministry, Nth. Parramatta. All welcome.

KEY DATES: LENT & EASTER

Saturday 4 March – 2.00 – 4.00pm, Women’s High Tea @ Parramatta Mission. “Many thanks” to Sue Rogoimuri for her wonderful organising of this special ‘International Women’s Day’ event.

Saturday 18 March – PCUC ‘Vision & Values’ Morning + Sausage Sizzle at Centenary UC from 9.00am. Enquiries: Fiona or David.

Sunday 19 March – 9.30am service at Leigh Memorial with Rev Geoff Smith, and in the evening from 6.00pm: ‘Jazz on Hammers’ at Northmead Uniting Church.

Thursday 6 April – 7.30pm: Combined PCUC Tenebrae service @ Centenary.

Friday 7 April – 9.00am: Combined PCUC Good Friday service @ Westmead.

Sunday 9 April – Easter Sunday services will be held at PCUC sites in Parramatta, Westmead & Northmead. There will be a Combined LM & LF service @ Leigh Memorial.

COFFEE SHOP KITCHEN

The kitchen in the Fellowship Centre that we affectionately call ‘The Coffee Shop’ (as it began by that name over 50 years ago) – recently received a new fridge and some extra cleaning by volunteers. The old freezer is gone, along with some excess “stuff” that had accumulated. There is still some cleaning work to do, but many thanks to Paul for his ongoing help in keeping this crucial space functioning despite its age – and to our congregation helpers who also care for it on a regular basis.

LIFELINE SYDNEY – 60th ANNIVERSARY, March 1963 – March 2023

Lifeline Sydney (now known as 'Lifeline Sydney & Sutherland') commenced in March 1963 under the guidance of Wesley Mission evangelist Rev Dr Sir Alan Walker (pictured left, 1911 – 2003). In addition to offering telephone counselling, Lifeline Sydney was Australia's first dedicated suicide prevention service. Lifeline Parramatta, led by Parramatta Regional Mission's Rev Dr Gloster Udy (pictured right, 1918 – 2003), began forming gradually in 1973 and officially commenced in 1974 at the Mission's freshly acquired property, 'Ellangowan', at 153 George Street, Parramatta. Lifeline Parramatta (now 'Lifeline Macarthur and Western Sydney') borrowed certain features of the Sydney operation such as 'non-directive' counselling by trained volunteers, but also included unique approaches facilitated by Gloster himself and designed for the needs of Sydney's West (including the formation of an overnight 'crisis team' operation in the Parramatta LGA) – *PM/PCUC Heritage Committee*.



시드니 조은 교회 Sydney Jo-Eun Church

23-10

사순절 제2주제 (2nd Lent of Sunday) 2023년 03월 05일 오후 1시30분

개회 찬송 (Entrance Hymn) 예배를 위한 묵상

예배의 부름 (Calling) 인도자

송영 (Gloria) **새 1장** **통 1장** 반복의 근원 하나님——다함께

사도신경 신앙고백 (The Apostle's Creed) 다함께

찬양/찬송 (Chorus & Hymns) 다함께

새 37장 **통 37장** 주 예수 이름 높이어

기도 (Prayer) 주기도문송 **새 635장** 하늘에 계신 우리 아버지 다함께

성경 봉독 (Scripture Reading) **신명기 8: 11-18**

말씀(Preaching)- 전현구 목사 **너는 기억하고 기억하라**

봉헌 송(Offertory Hymn) **새 338장** **통 364장** 내 주를 가까이 하게 함은

나눔과 알림 (Announcement & Notices)

1. 전 세계가 전염병으로 힘들 때 주님과 동행하시는 성도가 됩시다.
2. '매일 성경' 말씀으로 주님과 교제의 시간(QT)을 갖고 적용하는 훈련을 합니다.
3. 말씀, 기도, 전도 생활로 하나님이 기뻐하시는 삶을 사는 성도님들이 되시기 바랍니다.

폐회찬송(Final Hymn) **새 502장** **통 259장** 너 시온아 이소식 전파하라 (1절)

축도 전현구 담임목사

QT나눔 & 성경공부
오후 4:00

수요기도회 : 오후 7시
마태복음 18:11-10

새벽기도회 : 오전 5시
마태복음 17:14-19:30

Westmead Congregation

Sharing the Hospitality of Jesus Christ

Sunday 5th March 2023, 9.30am

Today we will be led in Worship by Reverend Vladimir – thank you Vladimir for the continued journey with us over the past few weeks.

Last week's service was an interactive one with Vladimir. During the season of Lent we were invited to put aside the known and familiar to create a "space". In this space of "wild-ness" we consider our inner lives, our temptations, and our subtle urges to control what we could easily – we are reminded of Jesus's own temptations and His humility, though He is the Son of God. Thank you, Vladimir.

We keep in prayers all those who currently are struggling, especially Edwina from No.28,

Bev's grieving family, Zita, and others that are going through challenging times in the congregation and outside.

Last week, it was a pleasure to see Fiona Bennetts joining in to our service – we hope you had a nice time catching up with the others! A thank you to Zita and Pat for hosting Morning Tea whilst Sue and Georgie had a well-deserved break.



(L to R) Fiona, Zita, Pat



Mere and Carol from No.28



- Sat 4th March** CCLM meeting for nominated members @ Centenary Church (TBA).
- Sat 4th March** International Women's Day High Tea 2-4pm @ Parramatta Mission.
- Sat 18th March** 9am- 1pm PCUC 'Vision and Values' Morning @Centenary Church including lunch.
- Sat 19th March** Jazz on Hammers @Northmead Church including dinner.

EASTER SERVICES AT WESTMEAD



Friday 7 April – Good Friday:
Combined PCUC service @ Westmead, 9.00am

BIBLE STUDY: Each Mondays, 2.00pm

Zoom Link: <https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/95043695512>

ENQUIRIES:

Chairperson:	Jan Robson:	0418 438 901
Administration &		
Liturgy Co-ordinator:	Lorna Porter:	0408 365 478
Prayer Chain Requests:	Ruth Geggie:	0430 271 205
Newsletter &		
Technology:	Cheryl Shyam:	0432 436 999
Technology:	Alysa Biju:	E-mail: westmead.uca@gmail.com

Leigh Fijian Congregation

1. **Lotu ena macawa oqo 05/03:** Na lotu ena macawa oqo na lotu vulavou ka na qaravi tiko kina na vakayakavi ni turaga. Ena veiqaravi tiko kina ko Pastor Filikesa Komotu kei Ofa Foiakau. Vunau vakarau Adi Akisi Allison kei Suguta Rogoimuri. Tu vakarau ena veiliutaki soqosoqo ni tabagone. Veiqaravi ena gunuwaini Adi Akisi Allison kei Suguta Rogoimuri.
2. **Lotu ena macawa mai oqo 12/03:** Na lotu ena macawa mai oqo e rau na vunau tiko kina ko Adi Akisi Allison kei Suguta Rogoimuri. Vunau vakarau Emosi Rogoimuri kei Josefa Foiakau. Tu vakarau ena veiliutaki matamasumasu naba 1.
3. **Lesoni ni macawa oqo (Lent 2) 27/02-05/03:** Vakatekivu 12:1-4, Same 121, Roma 4:1-5, 13-17, Joni 3:1-17 Maciu 17:1-9
4. **Lesoni ni macawa mai oqo (Lent 3) 06/03-12/03:** Lako Yani 17:1-7 Same 95, Roma 5:1-11, Joni 4:5-42
5. Na veidigidigi ni komiti era veiqaravi tiko vei na nodatou vavakoso vakaviti ena qaravi tiko ena macawa mai oqo nai ka 12 ni vula Maji (12/03) ni suka na lotu . Sa kerei tiko na noda masulaka tiko na vei vakarautaki ni Kalou ena veidigidigi.

Lolo kei Na masumasu - Veinanumi ena lolo kei na masumasu ena vei matai ni Vukelulu ena vei vula mai na 6am – 12pm se 6am – 6pm. Soli tu na galala ke o rawa ni qarava.

Veinanumi ena Masu : Kerei meda veinanumi tikoga ena veimasulaki vei ira na nodatou qase kei na vuvale ra sotava tiko na dredre ko Mereoni Kamotu, S Qata, Akisi Dovibua Baranski, Dia Allison. Ko ratou na veiliutaki tiko ena nodatou vavakoso vaka viti kei na veivuvale kece sara ena loma ni nodatou vavakoso. Na nodratou veiqaravi na Bula Feeding.

Gadrevi na noda veinanumi ena masu vei ira na lewe ni vavakoso era mai sasaga kei na nanumi talega ni nodra vuvale mai Viti.



Leigh Fijian and Berala Fijian Youth 2023



Sydney Uniting Fijian Fellowship 2023

Prayer Points

The people of Parramatta Mission invite you to pray for Our Community

- We give thanks that some small gatherings are starting to take place. We give thanks for welcoming cafes and the disciplines we have learnt to help keep us all safe.
- We give thanks for coffee, tea, muffins and spiritually encouraging conversations.

PM Westmead

- For the earthquake devastated Turkey and Syria – May You grant comfort and peace to those grief stricken by loss of loved ones and entire families. May You bring strength for the salvage and restoration efforts continuing.
- For the war in Ukraine which has continued past 12months now – We pray for peace to arise and pray for hope and Your light to open up the minds of those who persecute that they may withdraw.
- For those that are receiving treatment or are unwell in our congregations and outside – we pray for Your divine mercy and love to outpour on them and let them have the necessary care they need
- For anxieties that surround of work, school, finances, and relationships and health – Lord we ask for Your guidance and the correct people to come forth to help.
- For doctors nurses and health care workers- We pray for renewed energy, help in staffing and Your help with their families.
- For the homeless and those that are desperate as they are facing a crisis of homelessness in their lives – Lord grant Your peace and security upon them that they may know safety, love and help.

PM Fijian

- We pray for those who are going through transitions from school to beyond.
- We pray for the Synod Pulse Team and Ofa's role as a newly commissioned Pastor in the Team, resourcing youth ministry across NSW/ACT.
- We pray for the guests at the Bula Feeding Ministry and Meals Plus and our wonderful volunteers. We pray for those who are unable to meet because of rain or storms and for those who have been sleeping rough.

PM Korean Faith Community

- We pray for the Korean community in Western Sydney and for the revival of the church.
- We pray especially for Nak Su Baik, Kyeong Ok Hyeon (Those who are not in good health).

Prayer Points

PM Leigh Memorial

- We pray for congregation members, leaders and staff who are unwell, or having tests or procedures, and those experiencing anxiety surrounding work, study, family life or health. We particularly remember our members in need of additional support at this time, including those who are separated from their families or grieving. We also remember those within our congregations who are devoted carers to others in their family or within the community;
- We pray for wisdom and inspiration to infuse all current and forthcoming decision-making processes and actions by our dedicated ministers, leaders, managers and staff – and specifically pray for Paul and the team at Meals Plus, Cameron and his team at Westmead, the Bula Feeding ministry, and the life and witness of our fellow Parramatta Mission & Parramatta City Uniting Church congregations;
- We also pray for greater mutual respect, compassion and care within our local communities, and for the realisation of a community-wide spirit of inclusion and love for all people.

Wider Work

For our Combined Parramatta Mission Team

- May God guide all our staff and volunteers to live out our values of grace, inclusion, dignity, faith and hope;
- Rev. Vladimir, Rev. Hyun Goo, Chaplain Sarah, PMC Chairperson, David and Secretary Robert and all those who lead and serve.

Service & Zoom Information

Leigh Memorial Congregation

Time: Sunday 9.30am on site & Zoom

<https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/5199089657>

Meeting ID: 519 908 9657

Westmead Congregation

Time: Sunday 9.30am on site

Leigh Fijian Congregation

Time: Sundays 11.15am on site

Pastoral Contacts

Prayer Points may be sent to
wecare@parramattamission.org.au

For a conversation or to contact a Minister, please call
Parramatta Mission Reception (9am-3pm)
119 Macquarie Street Parramatta NSW 2150
9891 2277

Leigh Memorial Church
119 Macquarie Street Parramatta NSW 2150
9891 2277

Westmead Church
175 Hawkesbury Road Westmead NSW 2145
9891 2277

IN TIME OF PASTORAL NEED

Please contact our minister Vladimir Korotkov for any pastoral needs.

Rev Vladimir Korotkov (Transition Minister)	0431 759 573
Rev John Barr	0400 694 540
Pastor Fil Kamotu	0404 552 915

YOU CAN ALSO CONTACT THESE PEOPLE FOR PASTORAL ISSUES

Rev Hyun Goo Jun (Korean Faith Community)	0433 320 588
Pr Sarah Bishop (Children's Hospital)	0429 912 943
Anare Vocea (Fijian Vakatawa)	0432 772 852



Visit our website and blog www.parramattamission.org.au