# OUR NEWS 16th April 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. PARRAMATTA CITY UNITING CHURCH Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a: 22-41

"Bad" and "Good" Religion



#### **Rev John Barr**

One of the most splendid examples of medieval, Gothic architecture is Notre Dame Cathedral in the heart of Paris. But among the millions who flock to see this magnificent place, few seem to notice two large female figures carved of stone standing on either side of the main entrance. The figure on the left is dressed in fine robes and is bathed in light. She stands upright wearing a crown and carries a chalice and staff adorned with a cross.

On the right side is another figure. Her head is bowed. A large snake is drooped over her head, covering her eyes, while she carries a broken staff. In her other hand some tablets slowly slip from her grip.

The first figure is "Ecclesia" or "Church". The second figure is "Synagoga" or "Synagogue".

The first figure represents the church triumphant while the second figure declares the humiliation and defeat of the synagogue. This is a legacy from medieval times when the Church ruled supreme, and Europe's Jews were tragically ostracised, marginalised and greatly persecuted.

Across the English Channel, in the city of Norwich, there is another magnificent Cathedral. My wife and I visited Norwich Cathedral some six years ago and I remember walking past the choir stalls and noting, among many things, some intricate wood cravings depicting a large owl being attacked and pecked by swarm of birds. I was rather curious and, on investigation, discovered this scene portrays the virtuous reacting to the vile and wicked.

As a creature of the night, the owl in medieval times was considered to be a bird that avoided the light and was, therefore, a troublesome, evil creature that had to be despised and rejected. Only later was the owl associated with wisdom.

The owl represented Judaism while the birds represented an aggressive, rather self-righteous Christianity casting out evil and bearing witness to the light.

I must admit, all of this deeply troubles me. Notre Dame's "Ecclesia" and "Synagoga" together with Norwich's birds and the owl both have their roots in the claim Christianity has superseded Judaism, that the church triumphs over the synagogue, that the Jewish community is to be condemned because they are collectively responsible for death of Jesus.

In the light of history and, indeed in the light of some of terrible stuff happening today as antisemitic vandals targeted candidates in the Victorian electorate of Kooyong during the last Federal election and then as we witness Nazi salutes on the streets of Melbourne, we cannot, as church overlook these things. We cannot, I believe, not ask questions.

What's going on here?

l ask these questions as I read Peter' sermon in Acts 2 today.

This is actually the last section of a sermon preached on the Day of Pentecost as Peter and the other apostles focus on what Easter is all about.

Peter declares that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is "attested" to them by God as the One who is promised right back in the Old Testament as israel's true and everlasting king. To "attest" is to "display" or "appoint".

But Peter then goes on to declare that the people just didn't see this. Moreover, they ganged up on Jesus by having him executed. In Peter's words they "crucified and killed" the Messiah.

Such deeds make those who denied and crucified Jesus into enemies. This claim is grounded in the words of Psalms which Peter quotes: "until I make your enemies my footstool". Now, on hearing these words, the assembled crowd are, in the words of our text today, "cut to the heart". They were "pricked with a sharp point", they were "stung with grief", "their hearts were deeply pierced". And, in doing so, people repent and are received into the fellowship of this new community of Christ through the ritual of baptism.

On first reading this story from the Acts of the Apostles, it appears the Jewish community is being accused of crucifying Jesus. And because of this, over the following 20 centuries the Jewish community has been made the "footstooi" of a triumphant, victorious church.

But does Peter, in his sermon, really intend this? Is Peter condemning the Jewish community to eternal damnation? Is this what God really wants?

One commentator refers to our reading today as "Peter's nightmarish sermon". But is it really intended to be a "nightmare"?

Time doesn't permit me to go into great details. But there are a couple of points to make.

Peter is speaking to a particular context. He does seem to go soft on Rome, preferring to blame the Jews, even though Jesus is sentenced to death and crucified under Roman law.

But to blame to Rome upfront would have made life untenable for the early Christians. They were extremely vulnerable and completely at the mercy of the empire. However, in saying this, it did not stop the early Church taking on the Emperor by declaring Jesus, and not Caesar, is the divine "Son of God".

Secondly, Peter in his sermon, is actually not addressing an issue concerning Christians and Jews. Peter is not highlighting a dispute between the church and synagogue. Peter is not attempting to pit one race or nation against another. This, sadly, comes later in church history.

Rather, Peter is dealing with an internal matter, a local affair, involving fellow first century Jews at a particular time and place. The issue concerns Jesus of Nazareth. Is he the promised Messiah? Or is Jesus a ring-in, an infidel who perverted the law, blasphemed against the name of God and, therefore, deserved everything he got?

Peter is adamant. Jesus is the Messiah and many of those feliow Jews he addresses are convinced. We are told some three thousand responded. They repented and were baptized.

Friends, we need to listen to his story for what it is. But so often people read into a text what they want to see. So often people choose to hear what their fears and prejudices dictate. And the text of Peter's sermon is no exception.

Over the centuries fears, prejudices and indeed, a maligned scapegoating of Europe's Jewish community, has formed and shaped the way the text of Peter's sermon is read and understood.

For you see, Peter is not laying blame for Jesus' death at the feet of the Jewish community today. Peter is not saying Judaism is a fraud. Peter never intends that Judaism be written-off. Peter never suggests the church must dominate or even crush the synagogue!

But a selective, biased, prejudiced reading of scripture has "justified" such a reading of this text. And the result of this toxic approach is depicted on the edifices and in the interior decorations of Europe's great medieval cathedrals.

We witness it even today in the attitudes and actions of marginal yet vocal neo-fascist groups. And this kind of toxic thinking raises its ugly head so many other ways which impact on all sorts of people across the world.

For example, the evil of white supremacy (which is on the rise today) is often grounded in a warped reading of biblical texts.

The demonisation of Islam, as epitomised by the statement of a former US president who declared "Islam hates us", is embedded in the view that other faiths are simply the work of the devil.

The history of colonisation, which the church was often part of, was aimed at "civilising" others in the name of a "superior" of European Judeo-Christian society. We are aware that here is Australia this led to dispossession and immense suffering among First Nations people.

The incarceration and now turning back of asylum seekers is entrenched in a pretentious, selfish sense of Christian nationalism that says we have a God-given right to close our boarders.

The subordination of women and the repression of woman's rights is often shaped by a narrow reading of Paul's teachings which were written for a specific time and purpose - but now serve to inhibit and disempower half the population today.

And the inability of many Christian churches to address current issues of sex, sexuality and gender seems to be implanted in an unyielding need to "proof-text" or take biblical texts out of context to satisfy prejudices and feed fears.

Friends, Peter's sermon highlights the call "to repent and be baptised". Here people are summoned to make a radical turn by recognising Jesus as the Messiah. People are challenged to make a complete change in direction by making a commitment to Jesus as their risen Lord. This call is important. And it very much holds true for today. However, I believe we can identify a new call here "to repent and be baptised".

This is a call is to turn away from such toxic measures which allow the Bible to be distorted.

This is a call is to change direction by reading scripture and living the Christian life in a way that is devoid of assumptions, aspirations, prejudices, and fears which serve to jaundice who we are as a church. Indeed, this is a call is to move from away from religion that is "bad" to religion that is "good"!

And to be baptised is to recognise that we are received into a faith that is neither self-righteous nor justified in writing others off. Rather we are received into a faith that declares an unconditional love for all people.

We are received into a way of life that is liberating and life-enhancing. We are received into a faith which gifts us with a vision that embodies justice and peace, that binds people together in grace.

Some years ago a Catholic university in Philadelphia, USA, commissioned a sculpture by Joshua Koffman. The intention was to reverse the medieval portrayal of a triumphant church defeating a humiliated Judaism - and to thus challenge those things which distort and pervert the Good News of Jesus.

Called The Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time, this piece, unlike Notre Dame's two contrasting women, depicts two sisters of equal dignity.

They hold their respective holy scriptures with poise and composure. These sisters are both proud, crowned women, sitting graciously, side by side, as they learn from each other's sacred texts and traditions.

The Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time is pictured below. Spend a little time looking at it. What do you think? What do you learn here?



Friends, this is a remarkable piece of work and I believe it speaks loudly to us today in a world where, I believe, a narrow, self-focussed, self-righteous, toxic religion can bring the worst out in people.

And what's really important here is that <u>The Synagoga and Ecclesia in Our Time</u> represents, I believe, a significant move from "bad" religion to "good" religion!

On this Second Sunday of Easter, think about these things.

For you see. Jesus comes to us as a Messiah of peace. Jesus, risen from dead, is present among us to bring about justice for all. The spirit of the risen Christ is here to live within us as we bear witness to a mercy and grace that never distorts, condemns, or simply writes others off.

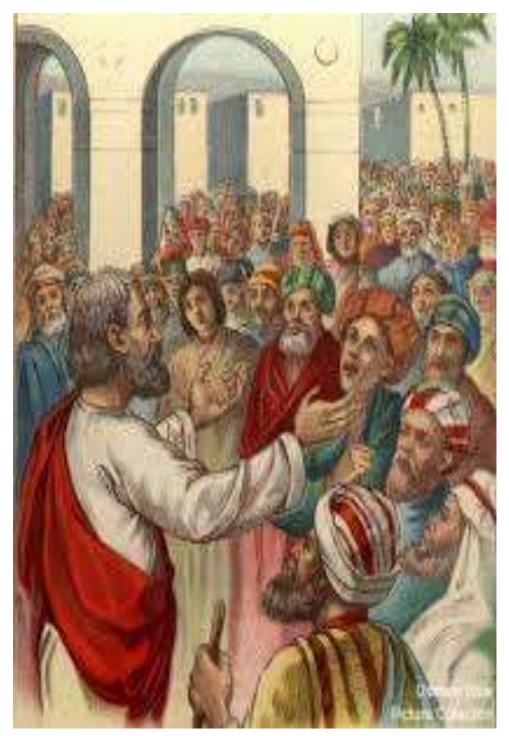
Let us acknowledge this. Let us embrace it. And let us live lives worthy of such a calling.

Amen.

## Foster your faith this week

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 Ps 16

1 Pt 1:3-9 Jn 20:19-31



## Leigh Memorial Congregation

#### WORSHIP THIS SUNDAY

This **Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> April** (the second Sunday in the liturgical season of Easter), we'll be gathering for worship <u>Onsite + Zoom</u> at Leigh Memorial at **9.30am** with **Rev John Barr**. The theme of John's Reflection this week is "bad" and "good" Religion. NB: Thanks again to everyone who contributed to our happy Easter Sunday worship time with Leigh Fijian last week (pictured) and a wonderful morning tea together after the service. Moderator **Rev Simon Hansford's inspirational Easter reflection 'Walking in the Silence'** is available via the following link: <u>https://ume.nswact.uca.org.au/resources/easter-2023/</u>



#### PASTORAL MESSAGE

Our thoughts and prayers remain with those in our worship community who are unwell at the present time or facing other challenges. We also pray for "safe travels" for those among us who are currently travelling locally, interstate or overseas. Contact details for the ministry team (Rev Geoff Smith, Rev John, Pastor Fil & Pastor Sarah) are in the newsletter. Rev Vladimir remains on leave. The Leigh leaders/worship team can be contacted via the Leigh Memorial email: LeighMenorialUniting@gmail.com

## WORSHIP - APRIL

Sunday 16 April – Worship @ 9.30am with Rev John Barr Sunday 23 April – Worship @ 9.30am with Rev Geoff Smith Sunday 30 April – Worship @ 2.00pm, Centre for Ministry (Combined PCUC service)

#### INVITATION TO REV GEOFF'S INDUCTION

On **Sunday 30 April** there will be NO services held at Leigh Memorial. Instead, from 2.00pm, the **Induction service** for the PCUC's new Lead Minister, **Rev Geoff Smith** will be taking place at the Centre for Ministry (Masons Drive, North Parramatta) as a combined PCUC service – followed by afternoon tea. Please speak with the leaders' team if you would like to attend but aren't sure of transport, or need any further information or assistance. NB: The site is fully accessible and includes onsite and street parking. We are all looking forward to formally welcoming Geoff and acknowledging his commencement. All Welcome!

#### 'GLOBAL NEIGHBOURS' – A MESSAGE FROM UNITING WORLD

"That's a wrap! Thank you for being a part of Lent Event 2023. We hope the last 40 days have been an enriching time for you as you've taken the opportunity to intentionally pray, live simply and give. We're also immensely grateful for the difference you've made in the lives of our global neighbours through your fundraising and support. We still have "Global Neighbours" Bible Studies in stock (please check the website). This resource has been prepared for you to use at any time to discover how to be a good global neighbour – with inspirational lessons from our partners around the world."

#### A VIEW FROM THE NEW 'MACQUARIE LANE'...

Following the recent change to traffic exits from the Parramatta Mission/ Leigh Memorial site on Macquarie Street – ie. one way along the new 'Macquarie Lane' onto Smith Street – the view back to the church includes some of the new buildings in Parramatta Square and the Holdmark building to the right. The 'scale' of buildings in this image is also significant. Leigh Memorial (with its original spire) was once the tallest building in Parramatta! NB: Metro rail construction work is gradually increasing near us and will continue for some time. The Light Rail is due to commence operating in 2024.



## Westmead Congregation

## Sharing the Hospitality of Jesus Christ

## Sunday 16th April 2023, 9.30am

Pastor Fil will be leading us in Worship today. Thank you, Fil. There will also be a Thanksgiving included in the service. (See details below).

As we journey forward in the Easter season, we remember the joy of Christ's resurrection and the hope it brings.

Good Friday Worship at Westmead was very well attended by the combined congregations of the PCUC (Parramatta City Uniting Church)

 a special thanks to Reverend Geoff Smith and Reverend John Barr for conducting the service.

A thank you also to everyone who took part in the service.

Easter Sunday Service was led by Pastor Fil. Fil reflected on the reason for celebrating Easter. It is a reminder that God took pain, suffering,

sorrow and death upon Himself and turned it into New Life. "Easter is the continuing presence of Christ in our life – it is

a promise that points to a future of love, joy and hope".

"Look for the things that offer us life – (don't seek Jesus in the dead)". Thank you, Fil, for your encouraging message.

Greg and Robyn Hallinan continue to be in our prayers.

## WESTMEAD WORSHIP: APRIL 2023.

16<sup>th</sup> April: Pastor Fil Kamotu

A Thanksgiving will be included in the service and you are invited to bring along non-perishable food items which will later be donated to Meals Plus.

23<sup>rd</sup> April: Pastor Fil Kamotu.

Diary dates

## **REV. GEOFF SMITH'S INDUCTION:**

**Sunday, 30 April** - Geoff Smith's induction as the PCUC's Lead Minister will take place from 2.00pm at the Centre for Ministry, North. Parramatta. There will be no worship services held at PCUC churches on this Sunday.

## Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023

On 22 October 2022 a number of PCUC people attended a very informative Grantham Heights gathering where Guest Speaker, Rebecca Andrews, spoke about the work of building freshwater wells in West Papua.



This work is ongoing and a Market Day will be held at Pitt Town Uniting Church on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2023 to raise further funds for this ministry. (for further information-see flyer).

BIBLE STUDY: Each Monday, 2.00pm Zoom Link: <u>https://uca-nswact.zoom.us/j/95043695512</u>

# MORNING MEDITATION

## Winter Time change! 3 April 2023 - 29 Sept 2023



Meditation: NSW: 7:45-8:20am QLD: 7:45-8:20am TAS: 7:45-8:20am NT/SA: 7:15-7:50am

Each weekday morning.

Campfire in the Heart zoom:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/7794705793? pwd=RmJKNm5icVdXekVXRm5XdlBhcXA3Zz09

Meeting ID: 779 470 5793 Passcode: welcome

> Any questions: Sarah Bishop sarah@bluetardis.com.au 0412 606049

you are also welcome to join:

## Campfire in the Heart Morning Prayers

Morning Prayer: NSW - 7:00-7:30am QLD - 7:00-7:30am TAS - 7:00-7:30am NT/SA - 6:30-7:00am

We follow the lectionary (https://universalis.com/1000/ mass.htm) and also the Rule of St Benedict on Fridays. The basic format is: Thanksgiving, Reading and sharing around the scriptures of the day, prayers for the world.

You can participate either by sharing or listening or both.

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<b>예배의 부름</b> (Calling)				인도자
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<b>사도신경 신앙고백</b> (Th	ie Apostle	's Creed) ·····		····· 다함께
<b>찬양/찬송</b> (Chorus &	Hymns)			다함께
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축도			귐	엘리야 목사
QT나눔 & 성경공부 수요기도회: 오후 7시 오후4:00		새벽기도희 : 오전 6시 민수기 14:26-16:50		



**1. Lotu ni macawa oqo 16/04:** Na lotu ena macawa oqo ena veisau vunau tiko na Parramatta Nepian Presbytery. Veisau vunau kei Campbelltown. Rau na gole yani ki Campbelltown na chairman Sosiceni Toa kei Epeli Semani. Vunau vakarau Sireli Tuiloma kei Senitiki Qata. Tu vakarau ena veiliutaki wasewase naba 1.

**2. Lotu ena macawa mai oqo 23/04**: Na lotu ena macawa mai oqo na veisau vunau kei Fiji Parish. Rau na gole yani kina Fiji Parish Sireli Tuiloma kei Senitiki Qata. Vunau vakarau nai vakatawa Anare Vocea kei Serupepeli Nagatalevu. Tu vakarau na veiliutaki wasewase naba 2.

**3. Lesoni ni macawa oqo 10/04 – 16/04:** Cakacaka 2:14, 22-32 Same 16 1 Pita 1:3-9 Joni 20:19-31

**4. Lesoni ni macawa mai oqo 17/04 – 23/04:** Cakacaka 2:14, 36-41 Same 116:1-4 1 Pita 1:17-23 Luke 24:13-35

5. Na Kids Camp Out ena qaravi tiko ena macawa mai oqo nai ka 22 kina 23.

**Lolo kei Na masumasu** - Veinanumi ena lolo kei na masumasu ena vei matai ni Vukelulu ena vei vula mai na <u>6am – 12pm</u> se <u>6am – 6pm</u>. 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. Me nanumi na FNC ni tou na veiwaseitaka na veiqaravi kei na tolu na valelotu. Ena qaravi tiko na FNC ena Okotova ni yabaki mai oqo 2024.

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

# Vakavinavinaka vakalevu ni mai tomani tale tiko na veiqaravi ni Bula Feeding ena yakavi ni Tusiti.



## 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**

- Those especially in our hearts and congregations that are ill or are battling severe health conditions We especially pray for strength for family members as they care for their loved ones and wait in hope.
- For doctors, nurses and other health care professionals Lord we ask that You provide renewed strength and wisdom each day that they may be able to serve well. May You bless them with hope, energy, and love.
- For the arrival of peace in Ukraine and other war-torn countries in the world We pray especially for the poorer nations that are being affected by the war in Ukraine.
- Those who are facing conflicting decisions in life, those facing mental health challenges and those that are unheard We pray that You may provide comfort, guidance and understanding.
- For the homeless, hungry and thirsty and for those who encounter instability in their homes due to poverty, financial hardship, abuse Lord grant Your light to shine through to them that they may see respite and be given hope and joy.

## 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 members who are unwell, and those experiencing anxiety and grief.
- We prayerfully support those in our local communities who need additional care and support at this time, including people experiencing hunger, homelessness, addiction, family crisis and loneliness, in addition to those who assist them such as devoted care-givers, nurses, doctors, community support teams and emergency workers;
- We pray for wisdom and inspiration to infuse all current and forthcoming decision-making processes and actions by our dedicated ministry team, leaders, managers and staff and specifically pray for Paul and the team at Meals Plus, Cameron and the team at Westmead and for the life, witness and outreach work being conducted by our fellow Parramatta Mission & Parramatta City Uniting Church communities;
- We pray for greater mutual respect, compassion and peace throughout the world, and for the realisation of an international spirit of inclusion, acceptance 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 Geoff Smith, 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 Lead Minister Geoff Smith for any pastoral needs.

Rev Geoff Smith (Lead Minister)	0407 416 377
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



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