# OUR NEWS 1st October 2023



# Parramatta City Uniting Church

inc. Parramatta Mission, with its values of *Grace, Inclusion, Dignity, Faith & Hope.* 



Parramatta City Uniting Church acknowledges that we worship, work, witness and serve on the land of traditional owners, the Burramattagal clan of the Darug people. We pay respect to the original custodians of the land, and acknowledge elders past and present, and emerging leaders.

## Weekly Reflection Pentecost 18A, 2023 Matthew 21:23-32

# Words Are Not Enough Debie Thomas

When I was four years old, an elderly couple who attended my father's church invited our family over for dinner. There were no



children to play with at the parishioners' house, so as the evening wore on, and the grown-ups kept talking, I got bored. The hosts kindly set me up with crayons and paper at a desk in their study, but after a few minutes of listless doodling, I got tired of that as well, and started exploring the contents of their desk drawers instead.

In a large bottom drawer, I found a huge collection of keychains. Chains with simple silver keyrings; chains with pendants representing various states, cities, countries, and universities; chains with hearts, stars, rainbows, and animal charms. I fell in love with a gold chain that featured three tiny ice cream cones in bright, glittery colors — one chocolate, one strawberry, and one vanilla. Without giving it a second thought, I slipped the keychain into my pocket. My parents didn't discover what I'd done until we got home and it was time to change for bed. When the keychain fell out of my dress pocket, the predictable parent-child conversation ensued: "Where did you get that?" "I found it." "What do you mean, you found it? Where?" Etc.

When it became clear to my parents that they had a little thief on their hands, my father told me that I had to call the couple immediately, say sorry, and return the chain the next morning. I said no. Specifically, I said no because I didn't feel sorry. The parishioners had gazillions of keychains, they plainly didn't care about them very much if they kept the chains jumbled together in a desk drawer, the ice cream keychain was meant to appeal to kids, and I was a kid. So why did I need to apologize?

It didn't take long for the situation to escalate into a full-on battle of the wills. My dad was determined to get an apology out of me, and I was just as determined not to say a word I didn't mean. I'm guessing my father peered into my future that night and envisioned years of teen delinquency. For sure he was embarrassed that I — the supposedly perfect little preacher's daughter — had stolen from his own church members.

I can't remember now how long we battled it out. It felt like hours. In the end, my father — louder, stronger, and not as exhaustingly past his bedtime as I was — won. He called the couple and handed me the phone. I said a very petulant and unconvincing "sorry," and the next morning, I returned the keychain.

I know that my father had the best intentions that night. But the lesson I ended up learning was not, I think, the lesson he hoped to teach. The lesson I learned is that confession and obedience are primarily about saying the right things — the formulaic things, the expected things, the pious, dutiful, "Christianese" things. For years afterwards, I failed to understand repentance as a multidimensional action — an engaged and ongoing action of the heart, mind, soul, and body. Just spout the words the grown-ups want to hear, I told myself as a kid, and they'll leave you alone. Just talk like a good Christian, and you'll be one.

I begin with this childhood story because I fear that many of us who are "churched" settle for this shallow, "words only" version of the Christian life, even as adults. Over time, we learn to "speak the speak." We figure out what the magic words are — the words that will showcase our supposed spiritual maturity to the world. We "confess with our mouths" during the Sunday liturgy, or at the dinner table with our families, or in our midweek Bible studies, and somehow we forget that the life God calls us to live is a wholly integrated life — a life in which our words and our actions infuse, enrich, mirror, and reinforce each other.

In our Gospel reading this week, Jesus tells the story of a man who had two sons. When the father asked the first son to go and work in the vineyard, that son said, "No, I will not," but later changed his mind, and did the work his father needed done. When the father asked the second son to go help in the vineyard, that son said, "I will, sir," but then he didn't go. "Which son," Jesus asks the chief priests and the elders after telling this story, "did the will of his father?"

Of course we know the correct answer. We know it as well now as the chief priests and elders knew it back in Jesus's day. The first son did the will of his father. It was not what either boy said that mattered in the end; it was what they did.

Yes, we know the correct answer to Jesus's question — and yet we struggle to bridge the gap between what we say we believe, and what we actually go out and do in light of those beliefs. Sometimes, we don't even struggle; we fall back into complacency, or laziness, or a selfprotective defeatism. We tell ourselves that our words (or our intentions, or our aspirations, or our vague future plans) are enough to keep God off our backs. We convince ourselves that action is just plain too hard and disruptive — and therefore unnecessary.

Which is precisely why, I think, Jesus levels this particular story at the chief priests and elders when they demand to know who the heck he thinks he is: "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?"

First, some context: as this Gospel reading opens, it's the Monday of what we now call Holy Week. Jesus has just spent the weekend entering Jerusalem on a stolen donkey, receiving the adoration of the crowds, cursing a fig tree, and slinging a whip around the temple to cleanse it of corruption. In other words, he has just spent the weekend making holy trouble, and the religious establishment is furious with him. They can't believe this itinerant preacher's nerve.

His gall. Again: who the heck does he think he is?

As is typical of Jesus, he refuses to answer his accusers' question about authority. Instead, he asks them a question that is just as barbed, just as tricky: "Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin?"

The chief priests and elders know that if they admit that John the Baptist was a prophet sent by God, Jesus will ask them why they rejected John's teaching, and refused his invitation to repent and receive baptism. At the same time, they know that if they say John was nothing more than a self-deluded charlatan, the crowds — who love John — will turn on them. So they refuse to answer the question.

This is when Jesus pulls out the story of the father and his two sons — and concludes the story with the zinger that further incenses his accusers, and just about guarantees his crucifixion five days later: You, Jesus tells the chief priests and elders, are like the second son in the story. You talk the talk, you make lofty promises, you speak fluent religion-ese. But when John came and offered you the good news of the kingdom, you refused to act. You refused to do the actual work of God.

Meanwhile, the people whom you deem the worst sinners? The tax collectors and the prostitutes? They are like the first son in the story. When John offered them the gift of repentance and salvation, they responded — even though their lives until then had not been particularly pious. Recognizing their own helplessness, hopelessness, and depravity, they flocked to the wilderness in obedience to God, and repented in the waters of baptism. And yet even then — even when you saw countless others embracing the Gospel, you refused to change your minds. And so the prostitutes and tax collectors, the people at the bottom of your religious hierarchy of goodness and badness, will enter God's kingdom ahead of you. Ouch. Are we squirming yet? It won't do us any good to shake our heads at the obtuseness of the chief priests and elders, and then walk away as if this Gospel isn't for us. Because it is for us. The judgment implicit in Jesus's story of the father and the two sons is directed at every one of us

who claims the name "Christian." We are meant to be uncomfortable, to be confronted, to ask ourselves: which son am I? Am I the son who makes promises I fail to keep? Am I the son who talks the talk, and sincerely believes that my sacred-sounding words are enough? Am I the son who doesn't see repentance as a lifelong business, a business that didn't end at the altar call, or the confirmation service, or the baptism, or the newcomer's class at church, that first drew me to Jesus?

Or am I the son who says the wrong thing, but finally repents and obeys, anyway? The son who might not sound all spiritual and sanctified, but still does the work of love and mercy when the rubber hits the road? The son who recognizes that God is still at work, here and now, doing new things, transformative things, salvific things? The son who changes his mind when new truth, new life, new possibility, and new hope, reveal themselves?

It's worth noting here that the people who flocked to John and to Jesus were the people who had no other legs to stand on. They were desperate. They recognized the enormity of their own needs, hungers, weaknesses, and vulnerabilities. They knew that they could never attain holiness on their own. For them, the waters of baptism, the prayers of repentance, the grateful submission to Jesus's authority — these were lifeblood. Meat for the bones and water for parched tongues. Maybe, if religion remains casual and optional for us, we have not yet recognized the extent of our lostness.

To be clear, what Jesus called out when he "cleansed" the temple and infuriated the elders was not Judaism or its various forms of worship. It was a system of exploitation via exorbitant tithes and taxes that blocked access to the divine — that literally kept the bodies of the poor outside the gates of the temple, forcing them into more and endless debt before they could approach and worship God.

What Jesus opposed through the story of the father and the two sons was all forms of religion that stop at empty words. All forms of piety that don't move us into the world of concrete action on behalf of justice, mercy, equality, love, and compassion. All forms of Christianity that flicker to life on Sunday morning, but then fade out between Monday and Saturday. We are invited to be like the first son. We are invited to be like the tax collectors and the prostitutes. But we cannot do this if we keep our faith lives tethered to abstractions. If we live a Christianity of the mind without also living one of the flesh. After all, it is with our bodies that we experience pain, anger, terror, and joy. It's my chest that hurts when I mourn. It's my face that burns when I'm angry. It's my whole body that warms with pleasure when I'm happy. Our faith is meant to be embodied. To be incarnate. To be organic. To be active. In the realm of God, words — even the most beautiful words — are not enough.

#### **CONGREGATION MEETING & VOTING RESULTS**

Many thanks to everyone involved in the Congregation service, meeting and lunch held at Leigh Memorial UC on Sunday 24 September. Minutes from the meeting, including voting results, have been issued to the congregation via email, and some hard copies will also be available at each site this Sunday, 1st October. Enquiries: David Norris.



## Foster your faith this week

Ex 17:1-7 Ps 78:1-4, 12-16

Phil 2:1-13 Mt 21:23-32

### Leigh Memorial

#### WELCOME TO WORSHIP

We look forward to seeing everyone at Leigh Memorial this **Sunday**, 1<sup>st</sup> **October** @ **9.30am** with **Rev Geoff Smith**, inc. Communion (Onsite + Zoom). All welcome.

#### **FUNDRAISING STALL RESULT**

Many thanks for everyone's warm support for the fundraising stall at last Sunday's combined lunch! The stall raised **\$340.00** for **Meals Plus** — which roughly translates to 30 meals. Please continue to pray for Paul & his team plus the many volunteers who support the Mission on a weekly basis — and for all the visitors who come to Meals Plus each week seeking care, company & support. <a href="https://www.parramattamission.org.au/donate/">https://www.parramattamission.org.au/donate/</a>

#### PCUC: 'SAVE THESE DATES....'

**Saturday 7 October** – Combined Leaders Team (CLT) meeting @ Centenary, 10.00am.

Saturday 28 October – Working Bee no. 2 @ Centenary UC from 9.00am.

**Sunday 29 October** – Combined PCUC service: 10.00am @ Parramatta Park + Lunch.

**Saturday 4 November –** Combined Leaders Team (CLT) meeting @ Centenary, 10.00am.

**Saturday 11 November** – 'Vision' gathering @ Centenary UC from 9.00am. **Friday 1 December –** Carols & Sausage Sizzle, Hills Special School Christmas event (pm).

#### **UCA YOUTH CAMP**

The PCUC is sponsoring a group of youths from the Leigh Fijian Worship Community to attend the Uniting Church High School Camp (UYC23) at the Collaroy Centre between 3-7 October. All the best to this wonderful group of young people!

#### FREE BOOKS!

Some of the free, leftover books & other items from last Sunday's fundraising stall are now available in the Leigh Memorial vestibule, along with some of our excess heritage books. Other books have been donated to the Meals Plus Library in the Hall – which Paul tells us is very popular with attendees.

#### **COMBINED PCUC SERVICE, MEETING & LUNCH**

Below is a photo from last Sunday's special PCUC event @ Leigh Memorial, with 130 people in attendance. "Many thanks" to everyone involved in planning worship, our meeting and lunch – and to all those who brought delicious sandwiches & desserts to share with the rest of us!



#### **FAMILY BIBLE – HERITAGE ARTEFACT**

The NSW Society of Genealogists recently provided us with a special heritage item that could no longer be held in their own collection. The item is a large, illustrated 19<sup>th</sup> century Family Bible inscribed to William Byrnes from Mrs Oakes, dated Christmas Eve, 1872. William was a long term trustee and sponsor of our Wesleyan Methodist congregation back in the mid to late 1800s, and a famed local politician, mill owner and entrepreneur. He was well known in the town, along with his older brother, James Byrnes, who held similarly distinguished positions in church and public life. William married Ann Oakes in 1834, and the couple lived in a big house on George Street, Parramatta, with their 14 children (9 of whom survived to adulthood). The "Mrs Oakes" who gave the Bible to William was most likely his mother-in-law, Mrs Rebecca Oakes (pictured - widely known as the first female of European descent to be born in Sydney in 1789 and part of the influential Oakes family). NB: Rebecca was long-lived - passing away in Parramatta in 1883, aged 94 years. The Bible will be on display in the church on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October and then have a home in our archival collection.









#### Westmead

## **Sharing the Hospitality of Jesus Christ**

# Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> October – 09.30am

Our Worship service today, including Holy Communion, will be led by Pastor Fil - a warm welcome to you Fil, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Last Sunday it was a pleasure to meet the full congregation of the Parramatta City Uniting Church, at Leigh Memorial Church. Westmead members enjoyed the beautiful Fijian Choir singing as well as the live music accompaniment to the hymns. There was a meaningful and excellent reflection given by Reverand John Barr. (A copy of Rev. John's reflection can be found in last Sunday's Newsletter). A big "Thank you" to all who contributed to the luncheon – we all had an enjoyable and reflective time sitting, eating together, and experiencing the area in which Meals Plus meals are served.

For all those that agreed to be nominated as "Leaders", a heartfelt thank you and we especially pray for those who were elected by common vote.

Last Sunday, a few members of Parramatta City Uniting Church joined Jon O'Brien for the "Yes" Voice March which took place at Redfern Park. Bruce Bennetts and Stuart Hills marched in this as well as other Uniting members.

.





Top picture (Bruce Bennetts, Jon O'Brien), Bottom picture (Bruce Bennetts, Stuart Hills).

We keep in prayer all the H.S.C. students, especially Alan Biju and Nicole Kamotu as they begin exams on October 3<sup>rd.</sup> We also lift in prayer those who are unwell in the congregation, those who are burdened by grief, uncertainty, or loneliness, or other trying times. Please don't hesitate to ask for a personal prayer for yourself to be prayed confidentially by the Prayer Chain group - contact Jan Robson.

## Leigh Fijian

- 1. Lotu ena macawa oqo 01/10: Na lotu ni macawa oqo ena qaravi tiko kina na lotu vulavou. E na vunau tiko kina ko Pastor Filikesa Kamotu kei ratou na tabagone. Veiliutaki na soqosoqo ni tabagone. Na tali ni vunau eratou na veiqaravi kina na soqosoqo ni tabagone. Ena qaravi tale tikoga na sakaramede ni vakayakavi ni Turaga.
- 2. Lotu ena macawa mai oqo 08/10: Na lotu ena macawa mai oqo na vunau tiko kina ko Talatala Samu Sadrata. Vunau vakarau Emosi Rogoimuri kei Siaki Foiakau. Tu vakarau na veiliutaki matamasumasu naba 3.
- **3. Lesoni ni macawa oqo 25/09 01/10** Lako Yani 17:1-7 Same 78:1-4, 12-16 Filipai 2:1-13 Maciu 21:23-32
- **4. Lesoni ni macawa mai oqo 02/10 08/10** Lako Yani 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20 Same 19 Filipai 3:4-14 Maciu 21:33-46

**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 Cambelltown, St Mary kei Berala. Ena qaravi tiko na FNC ena vula ko Jiulai ni yabaki mai ogo 2024 e Stanwell Tops.

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 women's group departing for the Israel tour 2023.



시드니 조은	교회 Sydney J	o-Eun Church	23-38
18 성령강림 주일 (18th P	entecost of Sunday)	2023년 10월 01	오후 1시30분
개회 찬송 (Entrance Hyr	nn) 🥞	아이신 나의 하나님	다함께
예배의 부름 (Calling)			인도자
송영 (Gloria) 세1장	통1장 만분	<sup>특</sup> 의 근원 하나님	다함께
사도신경 신앙고백 (The	Apostle's Creed) ··		다함께
찬양/찬송 (Chorus & H 새 29 장	13-4	i 다 함께	다함께
기도 (Prayer) 주기도문	송 635 하늘에	계신 우리 아버지	다함께
성경 봉독 (Scripture Rea	ading)	히브리서 11:8-16	
말씀(Preaching)	전현구 담임목사	길 위의 니	<b>나그네로</b>
봉헌 송(Offertory Hymn	새 235 <b>통</b>	222 보아라 겉	거운 우리 집
나눔과 알림 (Announcen 1, 시드니 조은교회에 오 3. '매일성경' 묵상과 '공 님과 동행하는 삶 살아기 4. 어려움을 겪는 이웃들 5. 하나님의 기쁨인 전도	.신 여러분을 주님의 동체성경읽기' 통독 사시길 바랍니다 :을 위해 함께 중보	으로 말씀을 적 기도 해주시기 t	용하며 매일 주
폐희찬송(Final Hymn) 새	501장 통 255장	너 시온아 이소식	· 전파하라 (1절)
축도		₹	현구 담임목사
QT나눔 & 성경공부 오후4:00	수요기도회: 오후 ' 영왕기 상 12:12-		도회 : 오전 6시





#### WHAT'S HAPPENING ON THE DAY:

- Nepean District Historical & Archaeological Group artefact stall
- Meet the bell ringers
- The reprint of "John Lees The Chapel Builder" book, with new forewords by Jillian Critchley daughter of Merle Kavanagh and Rev Noreen Towers minister at Castlereagh, will be available for purchase
- Purchase & Donate a plant towards our new labyrinth garden

# PASIFIXA EMPOWERED 2023

A Community Event for Climate Justice and Cost of Living



# Saturday, **7th** October Nexus Meeting Room Pullman Hotel

9 OLYMPIC BOULEVARD SYDNEY OLYMPIC PARK NSW 2127





1pm - 4pm | Followed by Fiji Day celebrations nearby!









# Can you come to our Pasifika rally on climate with Minister Chris Bowen- Pasifika Empowered 2023?

Uniting Church members are invited to support their Pasifika brothers and sisters in a climate rally with Federal Minister Chris Bowen on Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup>.

This is a follow-up from the first climate forum held in Penrith in April 2022 just before the Federal election.

As with last year, the Pasifika Empowered 2023 forum is being led by Uniting Church Pasifika leaders. The event will be on the afternoon of Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup> at the Pullman Hotel in Olympic Park from 1.00pm-4.00pm. The event coincides with Fiji Day celebrations on all day at Cathy Freeman Park, just a few hundred metres away. The theme of Pasifika Empowered is on climate change and its impacts on the cost of living now, and our hopes for a good future – in the Pacific but and also here. We think especially of those who are more vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change, including communities in western and south-western Sydney.

The two-hour event will include welcomes from First Nations people and our new Moderator, Rev Mata Havea Hiliau, music and song and input on Pasifika theology and worldview. There will be personal stories of climate impacts, input from Chris Bowen and our questions to him.

While the event is led by the Uniting Church Pasifika community, we very much want the wider Uniting Church and community to be part of it. It is an opportunity to be in solidarity with our Pasifika neighbours, as well as voice our own concerns.

It is important to register as seats are limited (about 150). You <u>can register here</u>

It would be wonderful to have some members of our Parramatta City Uniting Church community supporting this event.

Please contact Jon O'Brien (Northmead/Centenary congregation) on 0477 725 528 or <a href="mailto:joobrien@uniting.org">joobrien@uniting.org</a> if you have questions or need more information.

# **Prayer Points**

# The people of Parramatta City Uniting Church and Parramatta Mission invite you to pray for our Community.

#### Westmead

- For those who are unwell or undergoing medical procedures We lift these and their family members and loved ones to You, Lord for strength and healing with Your grace.
- For the many students that will soon start their H.S.C. exams We pray for Your peace and guidance to be with them in moments of any anxiety. Be with them moment by moment.
- For the many facing the cost-of-living crisis, those that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, those struggling with personal conditions that make each day a little more difficult – We pray that You be with each one – may there be resources for the homeless in support and correct care.
- For medical personnel that face shortage of resources and for the waiting lists that extend as people wait for proper medical attention – We pray that that our government provide pathways to help this crisis.
   We especially pray for those attending to the disaster struck zones of Libya and Morocco and other zones that are currently facing famine and drought.
- For those suffering in war torn zones May Your peace encompass those that have lost hope. May Your love spark respect and neighbourly care between the aggressors.

#### 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.

#### **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**

#### **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 Parramatta City Uniting Church and Parramatta Mission teams

- May God guide all our staff, leaders, members and volunteers to live out our conjoined values of grace, inclusion, dignity, faith and hope.
- We pray for the work, witness and service of Rev Geoff Smith, Rev Vladimir Korotkov, Rev John Barr, Pastor Fil Kamotu, and Rev Hyun Goo.

#### **Service & Zoom Information**

**Leigh Memorial** 

Time: Sunday 9.30am on site & Zoom

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

Meeting ID: 519 908 9657

PCUC online service https://northmead.uca.org.au/

Westmead Time: Sunday 9.30am on site

Leigh Fijian 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 ministry team with any pastoral needs

$\Diamond$	Rev Geoff Smith (Lead Minister)	0407 416 377
$\Diamond$	Rev Vladimir Korotkov (Supply Minister)	0431 759 573
$\Diamond$	Rev John Barr (Supply Minister)	0400 694 540
$\Diamond$	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
 Anare Vocea (Fijian Vakatawa) 0432 772 852





