

# OUR NEWS

15th 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 20A, 2023

### Matthew 22:1-14

*The God who isn't*  
**Debie Thomas**

Sometimes, the most honest response to a story from Scripture is regret. Regret, repentance, and reorientation. This is especially true of Bible stories we inherit from other people — stories that someone else hands to us, wrapped in layers of interpretation so thick, we can't tell where the interpretation ends, and the story begins.



To put this another way, sometimes, we need to “unsee” a Biblical text before we can see it. New Testament scholar Amy-Jill Levine argues that if religion is supposed to “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable,” then Jesus’s parables are meant to do the latter. If we read them and find ourselves unprovoked, then we aren’t really seeing them. Jesus was no teller of cozy bedtime stories; his parables are designed to show us things we don’t want to see.

This week’s parable of a wedding banquet gone awry is no exception. No effort to soften its jagged edges will suffice; it is a harsh, hyperbolic story, steeped in violence. If someone were to make it into a movie, the genre would be horror.

And yet for centuries, we Christians have attempted to soften and sanitize this brutal story.

Most often, we’ve done so by flattening the parable into allegory. In the rendering I inherited as a child, the king in the parable is God, the son/bridegroom is Jesus, the wedding feast is the Messianic banquet, the rejected and/or murdered slaves are the Old Testament prophets, and the A-list guests who refuse to attend the wedding are God’s “chosen people,” the Israelites. And the B-listers? Those last minute guests who come in off the streets to fill the banquet hall instead? Those folks are us. The gentiles.

There’s no question about it; this is a convenient interpretation. For us, I mean. No discomfort or affliction to speak of — just one heck of a party. What could be better? The snobs who renege on their RSVPs get their comeuppance — they die — but we who have the good sense to say “yes” to the king end up snug and cozy in his palace, feasting on wine and caviar while the world burns.

This is the interpretation I grew up with, and for a long time I saw no problems with it. In fact, the interpretation was so airtight, it prevented me from accessing the actual parable at all. I glossed right over the extremity of its violence and the cartoonish quality of its plot. I reveled in its implicit judgment of “those other people” who stupidly reject the king’s invitation, and automatically placed myself in the category of those who flock to the wedding feast — fancy garb at the ready.

I grieve this reading now, and I repent of it. I repent of the way it automatically privileges me — my obedience, my good choices, my reward. I repent of the callous acceptance of vindictiveness, violence, and cruelty at its heart. And I repent of the anti-Semitism it espouses in the name of Christ.

Think about it. Once again, in this traditional interpretation of the story, the Jewish people get everything wrong, lose their coveted place on God's A list, and take a backseat to the more faithful and more deserving (gentile) church. What a dangerous and wounding angle on the story — an angle that participates in the long, bloody history of the church's abusive relationship with the Jewish people from whom we come.

But there's something else to repent of in the traditional reading of the story, namely, its false and terrifying depiction of God. As Christ's followers, do we really believe in a God as petty, vengeful, hotheaded, and thin-skinned as the king in this parable? A God who burns an entire city to the ground in order to appease his wounded ego? A God who forces people to celebrate his son's marriage while his armies wreak destruction right outside? A God who casts an impoverished guest into the "outer darkness" for reasons the guest absolutely can't control?

Obviously, the answer is no. Of course we don't believe in a God as monstrous as that. Do we?

I know that I'm pushing hard against tradition here, but the reading I inherited will not hold if we begin with a core commitment to the radical grace, mercy, hospitality, and sacrificial love of God. I mean, seriously? Invited guests who would rather commit murder than attend their sovereign's royal wedding? (How unpopular and horrid a sovereign!) Partygoers who have no choice but to carry on eating, drinking, dancing, and celebrating while their city burns to the ground? A king who invites a homeless guy into his palace and then banishes him for lacking formalwear? Honestly, why do we try to make this version of the story OK when it isn't OK?

I wonder now if Jesus tells the parable in such an extreme and offensive way precisely because we do believe in a God as harsh as the king who turns his armies loose on his own people — and we need the help of hyperbole in order to recognize it. Is it possible that Jesus is offering us a critical description of how God's kingdom is often depicted by God's own followers? What if the king in the parable isn't God at all? What if the king is what we project onto God? What if the king embodies everything we've learned to associate with divine power and authority from watching other, all-too-human kings and rulers? Kings like Herod. Conquerors like the Roman Empire of Jesus's day. Leaders in our own time and place who exercise their authority in abusive, violent ways, compelling their followers to gleefully celebrate in circumstances that call for lament.

Do we — consciously or not — present to the world a God who is easily offended, easily displeased, easily dishonored? A God whose holiness rests on the foundation of an unyielding and even violent anger? A God whose need to save face finally trumps his own graciousness and hospitality? A God whose invitation to salvation has strings attached to it? It's easy enough to say no, we don't. Yet we are surrounded by people who have been victimized by brutal religion, many of them bludgeoned by the "Christian" depiction of a God who is angry, withholding, transactional, and perfectionistic. Some of us have friends or family members who have experienced the church as petty, ungenerous, and judgmental. Most of us know Christians so narrow-minded and exclusionary in their faith practice that we dare not approach them. Some of us still carry deep wounds from the years or decades we spent appeasing the "king" we mistook for God.

“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son,” Jesus says by way of introduction to his parable. Okay, what will happen if we take him at his word? What might we learn if we attempt an honest comparison between God’s coming kingdom, and our current one? Are our tables open to all who come, and does our love extend to those who initially refuse our invitation? Are we willing to extend a welcome to those who show up unprepared, unwashed, unkempt? Do we take offense when people shy away from our banquet, or do we listen as they explain why our invitation strikes them as unappealing or frightening? Do we really want to open our arms wide, or do we have a secret stake in seeing some people end up in the “outer darkness”?

In the end, are we known for our impeccable honor, or for our scandalous hospitality? I begin with repentance, and now turn to reorientation. That is, I turn to the possibility of seeing this parable with new eyes. Eyes starving for Good News — not the mingy Good News that secures my salvation and my comfort at the expense of other people’s bodies and souls — but rather, the Good News of the Gospel that is inclusive, disruptive, radical, and earthshattering. The Good News that centers on the Jesus I trust and love. What would it be like to look for Jesus and his Good News in this story?

Here’s one possibility: What if the “God” figure in the parable is the one guest who refuses to accept the terms of the tyrannical king? The one guest who decides not to “wear the robe” of forced celebration and coerced hilarity, the one guest whose silent resistance leaves the king himself “speechless,” and brings the whole sham feast to a thundering halt? The one brave guest who decides he’d rather be “bound hand and foot,” and cast into the outer darkness of Gethsemane, Calvary, the cross, and the grave, than accept the authority of a violent, loveless sovereign?

Yes, it’s disturbing. But stay with it for a minute.

What would change for you if Jesus was the unrobed guest and not the furious king in this story? How would you have to change to welcome such a guest? To honor such a guest? To accompany such a guest? What robes of privilege, power, wealth, empire, location, and complicity would you have to refuse to wear? What holy rebuke would you have to speak or embody when the king demands your cheery presence at his table? What feasts would you have to forego to follow the unrobed dissenter when he’s escorted into the darkness, bound and broken for the sake of love?

To read the parable this way is to accept its indictment. To sit under its searing, breaking grace, and confess that I need to change my location in a story I thought I knew inside out. The parables of Jesus are meant to afflict the comfortable. The parables are meant to show us who God is, and who God isn’t. So. May we embrace the loving God who is rather than the vindictive God who isn’t. May we choose affliction over apathy, even when it costs us a spot in the palace. May we refuse sham banquets while our cities burn and our streets run with blood. May we always reject the invitations of heartless kings. And may we, like Christ the unrobed guest, disarm all powers that bind God’s children, and render the world’s oppressors speechless in his name.

## **MISSION FROM THE INSIDE**

**Listening to stories  
from inside the communities  
surrounding our sites**

**ALL PCUC MEMBERS ARE INVITED**

### **Where and When**

1. Westmead community: Sunday Oct 22, 11am-1pm  
@ Westmead Uniting

**RSVP: Jan Robson <janrobson18@gmail.com>**

**Food: please bring a plate to share**

2. Parramatta city: Wednesday Nov 1, 7-9pm  
@ Leigh Memorial

**RSVP: Liz - LeighMemorialUniting@gmail.com**

3. Northmead community: Wednesday Nov 8, 7-9pm  
@ Northmead Uniting

4. North Parramatta community: Saturday 18 Nov, 10-12  
@ Centenary Uniting

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**All events will include a shared meal**

**Please indicate attendance with Vladimir: vladimirk1@hotmail.com**

**Enquiries-Geoff Smith, 0407 416 377; Vladimir, 0431 759 573**

**A VSAG MISSION INITIATIVE  
A PCUC & PN Presbytery Partnership**

## OPEN CHURCH ROSTER

The congregation is going to trial a new 'Open Church' program at Leigh Memorial Church on Wednesdays between 1.00 and 2.00pm, starting on 8 November. On the final Wednesday of each month, the Open Church time will include a Communion service. We are currently compiling a list of volunteers who are willing to be part of a rotating roster. A brief orientation session for volunteers will take place at Leigh Memorial on Wednesday 1 November at 1pm. To register your interest, please contact Liz via the following email – [LeighMemorialUniting@gmail.com](mailto:LeighMemorialUniting@gmail.com)

***Foster your faith this week***

**Ex 32:1-14      Ps 106:1-6, 19-23**

**Phil 4:1-9      Mt 22:1-14**



시드니 조은 교회 Sydney Jo-Eun Church		23-40
20성령강림 주일 (20th Pentecost of Sunday) 2023년 10월 15일 오후 1시30분		
개회 찬송 (Entrance Hymn)	왕이신 나의 하나님	다함께
예배의 부름 (Calling)		인도자
송영 (Gloria) 새 1 장 통 1 장	만복의 근원 하나님	다함께
사도신경 신앙고백 (The Apostle's Creed) .....		다함께
찬양/찬송 (Chorus & Hymns)		다함께
새 27 장 통 27 장	빛나고 높은 보좌와	
기도 (Prayer) 주기도문송 635	하늘에 계신 우리 아버지	다함께
성경 봉독 (Scripture Reading)	마태복음 5:9-12	
말씀(Preaching)—— 전현구 담임목사	평화를 만드는 자	
봉헌 송(Offertory Hymn)	새 410 통 468	내 맘에 한 노래 있어
<b>나눔과 알림 (Announcement &amp; Notices)</b> 1. 시드니 조은교회에 오신 여러분을 주님의 이름으로 환영합니다. 3. ‘매일성경’ 독상과 ‘공동체성경읽기’ 통독으로 말씀을 적용하며 매일 주님과 동행하는 삶 살아가시길 바랍니다 4. 어려움을 겪는 이웃들을 위해 함께 중보기도 해주시기 바랍니다. 5. 하나님의 기쁨인 전도사명에 동참하시길 부탁드립니다.		
폐회찬송(Final Hymn)	새501장 통 255장	너 시온아 이소식 전파하라 (1절)
축도	전 현구 담임목사	
QT나눔 & 성경공부 오후4:00	수요기도회: 오후 7시 영왕기 상 18:1-15	새벽기도회 : 오전 6시 왕상 17:1-19:21

# Leigh Memorial

## WELCOME TO WORSHIP

We look forward to seeing everyone at Leigh Memorial this **Sunday, 15 October @ 9.30am** with **Rev Geoff Smith** (Onsite + Zoom). All welcome.

## PASTORAL NEWS

Our warmest prayers remain with all those in our worship community who are unwell or facing other challenges at this time, inc. Ben, Lalaja, Mae and Ruth. We are also praying for all those tragically impacted by the Afghanistan earthquakes and the outbreak of war in Israel and Gaza – and for the safety of the Leigh Fijian women's group currently visiting the Holy Land. We further pray that God's Spirit of hope, healing and reconciliation infuses Saturday's Referendum processes and their aftermath. NB: Those seeking additional support will find details for the PCUC ministry team in our newsletters, or please contact the Leigh Memorial worship team and/or the congregation leaders.

## KEY PCUC DATES – OCT-NOV, 2023

### OCTOBER:

**Sunday 22 October** - 'Mission from the Inside' @ Westmead (11am – 1pm)

**Saturday 28 October** - Working Bee no. 2 @ Centenary (9.00am – noon)

**Sunday 29 October**, Combined PCUC service @ Parramatta Park (Western side, Cumberland Hospital end) from 10am (BYO Picnic Lunch, chairs, rugs etc). NB: The morning will include the commissioning of incoming PCUC Councillors & CLT leaders

### NOVEMBER:

**Wednesday 1 November** – Orientation for Open Church volunteers @ Leigh Memorial, 1pm

**Wednesday 1 November** - 'Mission from the Inside' @ Parramatta, 7 – 9pm

**Wednesday 4 November** - PCUC Worship Committee & CLT meetings, 9 – 10am & 10 – 12

**Wednesday 8 November** – Open Church @ Leigh Memorial, 1 – 2pm

**Wednesday 8 November** - 'Mission from the Inside' @ Northmead, 7 – 9pm

**Saturday 11 November** – 'Vision' morning @ Centenary - inc. congregation name vote

**Saturday 18 November** - 'Mission from the Inside' @ North Parramatta (Centenary), 10 – 12

**Wednesday 29 November** – Open Church inc. Communion service @ Leigh Memorial, 1pm



## **RSVPs PLEASE – “MISSION FROM THE INSIDE” @ PARRAMATTA**

If you're intending to come to VSAG's 'Mission from the Inside' evening at Parramatta (Leigh Memorial) on Wednesday 1 November, 7 – 9 pm, please RSVP for catering purposes to Liz via:

[LeighMemorialUniting@gmail.com](mailto:LeighMemorialUniting@gmail.com)

## **LUMINOUS BOOK – SPECIAL REQUEST**

The Heritage Committee's recently released book, *Luminous – the stained glass history of Leigh Memorial Church, Parramatta (Revised Edition)* is the subject of an acquisition request by the Corning Museum of Glass and Rakow Research Library in Corning, New York, USA. Corning is the headquarters of glass manufacturing, glass art and glass history in the United States. The book also contains the stories of special windows at the PCUC's Westmead, Northmead & Centenary sites.

## **“WE BELONG” CHALK ART – MEALS PLUS**

“... So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (**Romans 12: 5, NIV**).



## Sharing the Hospitality of Jesus Christ

**Sunday 15th October – 09.30am**

Westmead extends a warm welcome to Vladimir who will be leading us in our Worship Service this morning.

Thank you for your message today Vladimir.

Last Sunday it was a pleasure to hear from Pastor Sarah. “There can be challenges and wrestles with authority and leadership” as we see in the parable in Mt 21:33-46. We can seek to “own that which is not ours but of God’s”. In our day to day living, we do not “own” anything but rather have it as a “gift” from God. We can caretake and “bear fruit” through sharing and suffering that may occur. We think of the land on which we live on right now and also our personal impact on the climate change that is occurring, through this parable. Thank you, Sarah for your lovely message.

We keep in prayer the tour group from Leigh Fijian that are currently in Israel, that they be safe and well. A prayer is included from Stuart Hills ...

*Abba, Father, we hold before you the intractable conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people. We grieve the loss of lives and we long for a just settlement leading to enduring peace. We pray that both sides will pause hostilities and make space for your Spirit of Love and Peace to open ways for them, to negotiate a lasting peace.*

*We ask this in the name of our brother, Jesus. Amen.*

Bible Study Monday Afternoons

All Welcome - Meets 2pm via Zoom

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

During this time of HSC exams we keep all students involved, especially Alan Biju and Nicole Kamotu, in our prayers.

### COMING EVENTS -



#### MISSION FROM THE INSIDE

Extended invitation to all PCUC to join Westmead Community on

Sunday, 22 October, 11am – 1.00pm

(includes a light lunch)

If you are able to bring a plate of food on this day it would be much appreciated.

Please speak with Jan regarding planning – Mob: 0418 438 901



Sunday 29 October – Combined PCUC service, 10.00am Parramatta Park. Byo bottle of water, chair, hat, sunscreen and picnic lunch.



Saturday 11 November – 'Vision' gathering at Centenary UC from 9.00am. On the agenda for this gathering day will be a discussion and vote on the congregation name.

**Please read the Newsletter for all events during October.**



## Leigh Fijian

**1. Lotu ena macawa oqo 15/10:** Na lotu ena macawa oqo na veisau vunau kei na PNP. Vunau lesi ki Berala Viliame Kamotu kei Taito Dovibua. Vunau vakarau Sosi Toa kei Epeli Semani. Tu vakarau na veiliutaki wasewase naba 2. Veiqaravi ena tali wasewase naba 1.

**2. Lotu ena macawa mai oqo 22/10:** Na lotu ena macawa mai oqo na veisau vunau kei Fiji Parish. Vunau lesi Sosi Toa kei Epeli Semani. Tu vakarau na veiliutaki wasewase naba 1. Veiqaravi ena tali wasewase naba 3.

**3. Lesoni ni macawa oqo 09/10 – 15/10:** Lako Yani 32:1-14 Same 106:1-6, 19-23 Filipai 4:1-9 Maciu 22:1-14

**4. Lesoni ni macawa mai oqo 16/10 – 22/10:** Lako Yani 33:12-23 Same 99 1 Cesalonaika 1:1-10 Maciu 22:15-22

**5. Ena mai lotu tiko vei kedatou ena sigatabu oqo na Prime Minister mai Viti Honourable Sitiveni L. Rabuka CF (Mil), Ost.J, MSD, jssc, psc**

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. 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 oqo 2024 e Stanwell Top.

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

**Uniting Youth Camp 2023 held at Collaroy on the 03 -06 October.**





# Prayer Points

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

### **Westmead**

- Those who are unwell either within the congregation or known to us. May the Lord send His Holy Spirit upon them, heal and lighten their load.
- The horrific conflict between Palestine and Israel - we pray for You to be there, especially where lives have been tragically cut short. We pray for Ukraine and other countries also, where armed forces control and patrol. Through Your power help peace to come.
- For HSC students as they sit for their final exams. May You provide strength in terms of peace and alertness.
- For the upcoming referendum voting to take place on Saturday - May You guide this process and allow reconciliation to keep occurring despite the outcome.
- For those struggling to keep up with rising costs, for those who are homeless, for those who have no employment - we pray for resources and for proper solutions of help and encouragement.
- For those suffering with mental health issues - may You be their true friend- may You guide, support and daily wipe away any disillusionment.

### **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](mailto: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

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## IN TIME OF PASTORAL NEED

Please contact our ministry team with any pastoral needs

◇ Rev Geoff Smith (Lead Minister)	0407 416 377
◇ Rev Vladimir Korotkov (Supply Minister)	0431 759 573
◇ Rev John Barr (Supply Minister)	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
◇ Anare Vocea (Fijian Vakatawa)	0432 772 852