

Link



Carpentaria Presbytery

- of the Uniting Church in Australia -

Pastoral Notes / Prayer Points

- ◆ **PRESBYTERY OFFICE CHRISTMAS CLOSURE:** Closing on Friday, 15th Dec at 5.00pm and re-opening Monday, 8th January 2024 at 8.30am
- ◆ Christy is on leave until end of Jan 2024
- ◆ Garry is in Brisbane at PSI/Presbytery and Placements meetings
- ◆ Garry, Christy, Ana and Robyn would like to wish you and your families a very Merry and Holy Christmas and a Happy and healthy 2024 to follow. May God bless you and keep you safe throughout this season.

Presbytery Office NEW

Postal Address

PO Box 6071
Mackay MC Qld 4741

(07) 4068 8131

Office Hours

Mon Tues Wed & Frid
8.30am-1.30pm

Executive Assistant

Ana Mila
(07) 4068 8131

office@ucacarpentaria.com.au

Presbytery Minister Rural & Chairperson

Rev Garry Hardingham
0409 276 940
presminrural@ucacarpentaria.com.au

Presbytery Minister Pastoral & Coastal

Rev Christy Allen
0418 184 834
presmincoastal@ucacarpentaria.com.au

Presbytery Administrator

Robyn Cooley
0429 195 506
admin@ucacarpentaria.com.au

Hospital Chaplains:

Cairns:
Rev Shane Kammermann
0409 287 109

Townsville:
Rev Barry Cox
0408 415 816

PRAYER FOR SAFETY

Father God, we lift up all those in the path of the hurricane that is quickly making its way towards land. We ask for your divine hand of protection on them. Give them peace, comfort and wisdom today. You are our strength in times of trouble, and our hope is in you! In Jesus' name, Amen!



Carpentaria News...

Greetings from Garry

A few weeks ago I had the absolute privilege to be the support person for Ueli (George) 'Otumuli as he faced the Synod Selection Committee panels in Brisbane. I felt for Ueli. I saw in his eyes exactly what I went through over 25 years ago when I faced the SSC. At that time, my support person was also a Presbytery Minister, Rev Dennis Robinson.

As I draw closer to my final year as a Presbytery Minister, I could not help but have a feeling of de-ja-vu and that, as I sat next to Ueli as he struggled at times to land on the right words, just as I did all those years ago, I felt a strong confirmation of God's timing being perfect as usual. At the very beginning of my ministry journey, a soon to finish Presbytery Minister offered to me his wisdom of service. And now here I was in the same position as Dennis knowing that Ueli was looking to me for confirmation and guidance. He is starting his journey as I start walking out the door. Nice!!

Life really is a series of bookends. It's full of de-ja-vus and mysterious dead-ends or discoveries and it seems, at times, that life folds over on itself and what you think is an ending is, in fact, a new beginning.

Christmas is always a time of beginnings and endings. Maybe because it sits so perilously close to the beginning of a new year and yet remains at the very end of the old. There's a sort of paradox here. We celebrate the newness of the Christ-child just as we wind down from the old year. I always think that Christmas should be moved to early to mid January or early February, a time when we are finally over the New Year celebrations. I never feel like I'm in the New Year until I stop finding myself writing last year's date on everything I sign.

But, it is what it is and I doubt I'm gonna get to change the date. Maybe it's one of the reasons I've always been a grinch at Christmas. It has never been my favourite time of the year. For me there is the paradox of celebrating newness of life as we reflect upon the end of another year. But maybe now, in this stage of my ministry and life, is the time for me to re-approach Christmas for its powerful stories of newness and hope, its bookend to the story of Christ's incarnation and the way this story has changed the world forever.

We will NEVER live in a "post-Christendom" world. Why? Because all the things we take for granted as being how the world works; from anti-slavery to women's rights to climate change activism and our legal codes all derive from this child born in a filthy manger so many years ago. Even Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims and atheists share in the benefits of this story. History folds over on itself even as the world strives to identify itself as anything but bound to the story of Christmas. Even if the world no longer cares, it carries the story of the hope of God forward in its very being.

While the church Ueli will be ordained into will be different to the church I was ordained into, it remains the very same church. Forever being renewed. Forever seeking God's new ways, new starts and sad endings. And the world around the church is still God's world. It still awaits the coming again of its Lord. Even if it has fallen asleep and seems unconscious to the Spirit. And despite all the secular nonsense flooding over the heart of the Christmas story, its still the story of Christ that remains at its heart. Christmas will never be drowned out by Santa Clauses and tinsel, because the narrative of peace and goodwill, the giving of gifts and the gathering of families, find their meaning in the story of the Gospel.

Teresa and I, Christy and Peter, Ana and Viliami and Robyn and Gavin all wish you a Merry Christmas. We count it a privilege to serve such a wonderful Presbytery. Each one of us value your support, your love and your prayers as we pray also for you.

This Christmas, may God plant anew a fire of hope in your soul. May the wails of the newborn and the cries of the crucified One be the bookends of the Incarnation that drives us to be all we can be in serving God as He renews His church and equips us for His glory.

Blessings and peace
Garry

UnitingCare Prayer Points for December

Escaping Violence Payment Program (EVP)

- ➔ The Escaping Violence Payment Program (EVP) is available to anyone who is experiencing violence from their partners. This service assists those seeking to leave a violent partner, or have recently left and are struggling with the finances to live their life in safety, can access some financial assistance, goods and services such as removalists, bonds or basics for a new home and support including casework from the EVP provider.
- ➔ Pray for the staff – that they have patience, wisdom and compassion for those who contact the service. That they may be aware of the need for self care, due to the nature of the stories that they may encounter.
- ➔ Pray for the clients – that they may be protected from those making their lives unsafe. That the services provided are one less worry that they have during this difficult time. Pray that the clients will be able to find healing and wholeness as they set about rebuilding their lives.

Rev Christine Herman, Cairns Region Community Chaplain (UCA and UnitingCare QLD)

Notice of Christmas Closure – Qld Synod Bookkeeping Services

Synod Bookkeeping Services will be unavailable from Thursday, December 21, 2023. Regular operations will resume on Tuesday, January 2, 2024.

We encourage you to plan accordingly and submit any urgent requests or documents well in advance of our closure to ensure that your needs are met promptly. Should you have any financial transactions anticipated during this period, we recommend preparing ahead of time so that we can assist you in ensuring everything is in order before our holiday break.

Synod / Assembly / UnitingCare / UnitingWorld News...

Grants available to promote reconciliation during National Reconciliation Week 2024

The Celebrating Reconciliation Grants Program funds community events during National Reconciliation Week (May 27 to June 3) to foster respectful relationships between Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, and non-Indigenous Australians. Eligible organisations can apply for grants up to \$10,000, with \$200,000 available for Queensland communities in 2024.

- [Click here for more information and to apply](#)

To apply, use The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (Q.) as your incorporated entity.

For assistance, contact Vanessa Griffiths at vanessa.griffiths@ucaqld.com.au.

Christmas Burnout

Christmas, a time for celebrating Jesus' birth with loved ones, can be challenging for many within our congregations and community due to stress, anxiety, loneliness, and financial strain.

If you're facing challenges, consider reading the ABC News article. [It's beginning to look a lot like burnout](#) for self-care tips and supporting loved ones.

For additional guidance and support, access our [TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program](#) or feel free to reach out to the Synod's Work Health and Safety Team at [07 33779870](tel:0733779870) or health.safety@ucaqld.com.au

Spread Christmas cheer and advocate for bridging visa holders



Spread Christmas cheer while advocating for a cause! Send a Christmas message to your local MP and state senators, urging support for income safety nets for Bridging Visa holders.

[Find cards on this link.](#)

Resources for staying safe during heatwaves

Heatwaves are no joke, causing more harm than any other natural disaster in Australia. Seniors are especially vulnerable to their effects.

- Prepare for hot summers in Queensland with [free resources](#) courtesy of Bluecare

BlueCare's heat health resources were co-funded by the Queensland Government and created in partnership with Griffith University.

Advent resources are now available!

We're thrilled to announce that all the 2023 Advent Materials are available!

The full set includes resources for Worship and Early Learning settings, as well as printable materials for Community and Church Families.

- Check out the full set and get ready to nurture the garden of your soul [right here](#) (Don't forget to bookmark this page!)

If you need additional information, please don't hesitate to contact our Advent champions. Jess Pinkerton at jessica.pinkerton@ucaqld.com.au or Paul Wetzig at paul.wetzig@ucaqld.com.au.



From The Word for Today...

Meditate on the Scriptures

'I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways.' Psalm 119:15 NKJV

If you want to grow spiritually, you need a consistent diet of Scripture. In fact, you will never outgrow your diet of Scripture. There is no substitute. There is no supplement.

The poet T.S. Eliot said, 'Everything we eat has some ... effect upon us. It affects us during the process of assimilation and digestion; and I believe that exactly the same is true of anything we read.' We are what we read. But let's take that a step further. Reading without meditating is like eating without digesting. If you want to absorb the nutrients, you can't just read it; you have to chew on it.

Meditation is the way we metabolise Scripture. That's how it gets into our spirit and our soul. The French writer Jacques Réda had a particular habit. He would walk the streets of Paris with the purpose of seeing one new thing every day. It was how he renewed his love for the city.

We renew our love for God in a similar way. Our love grows as we see new dimensions of His personality, and His personality is predominantly revealed in the pages of the Bible. What if we approached God's Word the way Jacques Réda walked the streets of Paris? Here is the secret of spiritual growth: you can't merely read the Bible, you have to meditate on it.

Reading provides breadth to our understanding, but meditation provides depth. If all we do is read Scripture, our understanding of God and our experience with Him is one-dimensional. The Bible is a kaleidoscope. Each time you turn it, another beautiful pattern of truth is revealed.

(Reflection from vision.org.au website – The Word for Today reading, 6 December 2023) The Word for Today is authored by Bob and Debby Gass and published under licence from UCB International Copyright 2023)

