



4 DECEMBER 2022



Second Sunday in Advent

Welcome to worship this morning, and a special welcome to Felicity and John, Oscar and Luke, and their family and friends who are joining us for Luke's baptism, we hope you enjoy being with us.

Lectionary Readings

This week 4 December, 2022

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

Next week 11 December, 2022

Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Christmas Gift Collection

For many years we have collected gifts for those in our community for whom Christmas is difficult. This year however, most of the groups we have previously supported have indicated they would prefer gift cards in lieu of gifts so we have decided to collect money for those affected by the devastating floods in the central-west towns in NSW. We have been in contact with Macquarie-Darling Presbytery and are planning to send our donations to them to distribute directly to those affected by the flooding.

We are therefore having retiring offerings for the next two weeks, if you would like to contribute, please place your donation in the plate at the doors after worship each week.

Christmas Bowl Envelopes

After a year of war and 'unprecedented' natural disasters, more than 65 million people now find themselves homeless refugees. Christmas Bowl works with churches around the world to bring food, shelter and hope to many of these people.

If you are interested in supporting the Christmas Bowl, their envelopes are on the back table. Please either place your donation in the envelope and place the envelope in the offering plate, or you can donate online at mycb.link/48489.



Greystanes Uniting Church

Cnr Cumberland & Eldridge Roads (P O Box 5064)

Greystanes NSW 2145

Minister: Rev Gail Hinton 0407 269 162

Office Phone: 9636 3245

Email: office@greystanesuniting.org.au

Website: www.greystanesuniting.org.au

Gail's Message

In my early Christian journey my theology was black and white, I believed that good people went to heaven and bad people suffered eternal torment in a fiery hell. This black and white approach was based on a few verses within the scriptures that speak of an unquenchable fire, sheep and goats, the gnashing of teeth, darkness, and everlasting separation from God, pretty scary stuff!

It is important to read these verses in the light of Jesus' mission and his life, death, and resurrection. If we are not careful the apparent separation between the saved and the lost can cause us to be judgemental instead of forgiving, self-righteous instead of holy, and exclusive and elitist instead of graciously generous and hospitable.

Christians should also note that Jesus harshest words were not directed towards unbelievers but to those who were "in", the religious leaders of his day, the pharisees and the scribes, not to mention his own close followers, the often confused and slow to learn disciples. In this weeks' gospel reading we hear John the Baptist tear strips of the religious elite: "You snakes—who told you that you could escape from the punishment God is about to send? John goes on to describe Jesus coming with a winnowing shovel to thresh out all the grain, gathering the wheat into his barn, but burning the chaff in "a fire that never goes out" Matt 3:12.

I once attended the funeral of a close friend's father, who I will call Jay. I had known Jay most of my life and he had always scared me. I never saw him without a beer in hand and he always seemed cranky and gruff. In later years I discovered that Jay had battled major anxiety and depression as well as chronic back pain most of his life; you could say Jay had experienced a kind of hell here on earth.

At Jay's funeral I wondered how the Priest would honour this man who I thought had few redeeming qualities. Expecting some conservative theology and some skirting around the issue of Jay's salvation, I was blown away by the Priest's interpretation of the "fire that never goes out"; "Jays sins, all the things that made him less than God created him to be are now burnt away, Jay will remain, purified by the eternal fire, and gathered into Christ."

I learnt that day to widen my notion of God's grace and love, because when we face the finality of death the black and white approach no longer makes any sense.