



**12 MARCH 2023**

## Welcome

Welcome to worship, we hope you enjoy being with us. Welcome also to Rev Geoff Stevenson who will be preaching for us this morning.

## Lectionary Readings

**This week 12 March, 2023**

Exodus 17:1-7  
Psalm 95  
Romans 5:1-11  
John 4:5-42

**Next week 19 March, 2023**

1 Samuel 16:1-13  
Psalm 23  
Ephesians 5:8-14  
John 9:1-41

## Easter Sunday Flowers

On Easter Sunday morning, the bare cross will be transformed with fresh flowers. If you will have any flowers from your garden that we could use, please bring them with you and during the service we will all have a chance to bring our flowers forward to transform the cross.

## Thank You

To our church family, thank you for the lovely flowers sent to our home recently following my dear Mum's passing as well as your messages, love and prayer support during this time. Love from Julie and the Wilkes' family.

## Hands and Feet

We have been offered the chance to join with the Hands and Feet group, ([www.handsandfeet.com.au](http://www.handsandfeet.com.au)) to distribute fruit and vegies to those in our community who are struggling with food costs.

It will involve someone to coordinate the program and the sorting of the produce when it is delivered once a week and several people to sort the food for a few hours on a roster system with frequency depending on how many volunteer. It is not heavy work so anyone who can walk can participate and we expect it will start with a small number of recipients and gradually build up. The community members then come to collect the produce in the afternoon.

I'm sure you can see where I'm headed with this; we are looking for members to put their hands up to help this really worthwhile outreach to our own community before we commit to the program.

Brochures about the program and Hands and Feet are available on the back table, and are included in the email with this week's newsletter.

We plan for the congregation to meet after church next Sunday 19th March to decide whether to go ahead and register with Hands and Feet.

- Peter St



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## **Gail's Message**

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March was International Women's Day. Although I didn't celebrate the day in any particular fashion it did occur to me that I, as a woman, work in one of the most traditionally male vocations the world has ever known. Why? Here is a very, very brief history of the church that may offer some insights into the sexism that exists within the religious structures and institutions of Christianity.

In the first few hundred years after the spread of the gospels small churches sprung up across the Roman Empire. They were often persecuted for being weird, different and counter cultural. They were misunderstood, held in suspicion and eventually declared illegal by the ruling authorities. We get glimpses of these early churches in the New Testament. In Acts 2 we read that the early believers gathered together, holding all things in common so that anyone in need could receive assistance. We also know that early churches gathered in the homes of wealthy patrons, among whom were prominent women. In Paul's letters we read about "women who were the leaders of such house churches, Apphia in Philemon 2; Prisca in I Corinthians 16:19. This practice is confirmed by other texts that also mention women who headed churches in their homes, such as Lydia of Thyatira (Acts 16:15) and Nympha of Laodicea (Colossians 4:15). Women held offices and played significant roles in group worship. Paul, for example, greets a deacon named Phoebe (Romans 16:1) and assumes that women are praying and prophesying during worship (I Corinthians 11)."

If you know your scriptures well you may wonder about some of the passages that seem to condemn female leadership; more on the apparent contradictions within the scriptures another day folks! Back to church history. In the year 311 Constantine, the son of one of Rome's four rulers, won a battle that gave him ultimate power and authority over the Roman Empire. Constantine contributed his success to a vision of Christ and his subsequent sudden conversion. He then decreed that Christianity was no longer illegal (yeah!) and became the biggest financial supporter of the church, calling together bishops from across the empire and exerting influence over their decisions (boo!). Within a century Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire and from that time on, our faith lost its distinctiveness, particularly in regards to the place and status of women.

This week in worship we will hear John 4: 5-42, in which Jesus crosses all sorts of cultural barriers to speak to an unaccompanied Samaritan woman in the middle of the day. In this narrative we see perhaps the very first evangelist, teacher and leader and what do you know, she is a woman! The Way of Jesus, despite centuries of dilution under the cosiness of church and state still challenges us today to break down barriers, sexism, racism, ageism, all the excluding 'isms' so that in Christ all are equal. Amen.  
"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28 - NIV