



30 JULY 2023

Welcome

Welcome to church this morning, we hope you enjoy being with us.

Lectionary Readings

This week 30 July, 2023

Genesis 29:15-28
Psalm 105:1-11, 45b or Psalm 128
Romans 8:26-39
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

Next week 6 August, 2023

Genesis 32:22-31
Psalm 17:1-7, 15
Romans 9:1-5
Matthew 14:13-21

Ladies Bible Study

Ladies Bible Study will meet on Tuesday at 3pm in the chapel. They are looking at Study 8 - 'In Jesus' Name' - John 16:16-28

Office Update

Sue is on leave for the next two weeks, please see Peter St for any issues with the op shop or office.

Child Care Centre

Our centre is looking for more children so if you have family or friends looking for great quality care for this year or next year please refer them to us either through our office or direct to the centre on 96363246.

Welcome Simon next week

Next Sunday 6th August, Rev. Simon Hansford, Moderator of our NSW/ACT Synod will be our guest preacher. Simon steps down from this role in September and he may share some of his reflections on what it means to be "the Church".

Community Prayer Dinner

The annual Cumberland Prayer Dinner is on Tuesday 29 August at 7pm at Merrylands RSL. The speaker will be Rev Sam Abalo from Living Word Worship Centre and tickets are \$50. RSVP by August 14 to hmf@hlncl.org.au or 9896 2514.



Joshua 3:17



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Gail's Message

I am currently reading *Reconciling All things. A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing* by Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice. After doing my research for last week's service, I picked the book up and read a few pages under the heading **A Cloud of Witnesses**. "What a 'Godincidence' I thought to myself, "this is exactly what we have been considering in worship over the last few weeks". My Grapevine entry this week is the two pages I read that day. I pray it gives you some spiritual food for thought and encouragement for our Christian journey together as the Church.

A Cloud of Witnesses to Inspire Us

This new heaven and new earth is the final vision, the end toward which the journey of reconciliation leads. On the journey we can catch only glimpses of this end, but the hope of a new heaven and a new earth is what sustains us on the journey. Yet it is crucial that scripture offers not only a description of where we're going but also the gift of concrete examples of others who have made this journey before us. We need examples of people who travelled well - saints whose lives were fundamentally shaped in light of their anticipation of things not yet seen

The letter to the Hebrews describes the lives of Abraham, Sarah, Moses and many other people who lived by faith. In describing their lives and stories scripture inserts us into the company of this cloud of witnesses and us invites us to live like them in the present already transformed by the "things not yet seen". To accept this invitation is to live by the same madness that characterised the lives of these witnesses. We say madness because instead of predicting a future based on the present (the rational thing to do) these individuals shaped the present according to a vision of the future. This is the madness that the letter to the Hebrews speaks about in the life of (...) Abraham who set out on a journey without a clue about where he was going; of Sarah, 90 years old who believed that she could have a child; of Moses who imagined he could confront Pharaoh and his might

But it but it is not only biblical "heroes" who live by the madness of things not yet seen. The entire community is invited to live this way. Indeed, their stories are told in scripture as a reminder and an encouragement to the faith that "anyone in Christ" is called to live. Through stories like these scripture keeps alive for all of us the hope of the promises not yet fulfilled.

This cloud of witnesses includes all of us and, even more, those who will learn the good news of God's love because of our witness in the world. Ultimately, we are not called to be heroes, but saints. We do not become exceptional by virtue of our own character. Rather, we have been caught up into the cloud of God's grace. We have become living members of the body of Christ in the world. We know that anyone in Christ can live God's new reality now.

Reconciling All things. A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing by Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice. InterVarsity Press 2008. ISBN 978-0-0308-3451-8