



# The Messenger

South Mandurah Uniting Church's Weekly Newsletter

Welcome to our Sunday Service of worship,  
commencing at **9-30am** every Sunday

## Advent 4 22 December 2024



Welcome: Rosie Sharp & Judy Law  
Flowers: No flowers thank you  
Coffee/Tea: Ken & Julie Lehmann  
Reader: Ken Lehmann  
Kids Church: Kerry Lawson  
Music: Sherryl Smith  
Church Rep: Andrew Telfer  
Worship Leader: Cynthia Clive  
Speaker: Evelyn Ashley

## Christmas 1 29 December 2024

Welcome: Keith & Jaren Picking  
Flowers: No flowers thank you  
Coffee/Tea: Lynsay & Jenny Dunning  
Reader: Keith Picking  
Kids Church: TBA  
Music: Jim McWhinnie  
Church Rep: Kerry Lawson  
Worship Leader: John Lawrence  
Speaker: Frances Davy



## Touched by God

Something strange happened to Mary. We all hear the story about Jesus' birth each year, and we celebrate the coming birth of the Christ child, the Son of God, Emmanuel. We sing songs of hope, love, and joy. We think good thoughts and get ready to celebrate with family and friends, with candlelight and cookies. We feel warm and good inside, extra magnanimous, extra kind. At least some of us do.

But long, long ago, before the celebration, God put Mary into an uncompromising position.

This happens to us too –often before we discover something new about ourselves, make significant changes in our lives, or change our perspective about the circumstances we find ourselves in. Although it might seem wonderful to simply slip easily into monumental life transitions or to round the turning points in our lives with ease like professional race car drivers, it really doesn't happen that way, does it? Most of the time, something uncompromisingly uncomfortable shoves its way under our skin, and we are forced kicking and screaming into our new reality. The greater the change the more likely we are to resist it, but with time and support from friends and family we adjust.

But what if that change would be condemned by society? In Mary and Joseph's time, society strongly disapproved of pregnancy out of wedlock and Joseph considered divorcing her but both had faith in God. When Mary was visited by an angel she promised to follow God's instructions. Joseph was shocked that Mary was pregnant but he was reassured that Mary, who was a virgin, had been touched by God and would bear a son. What extraordinary tidings for two humble people in a small impoverished village in a backwater of the Roman Empire. But they trusted in God, followed His bidding and Mary gave birth in a stable in Bethlehem, and history was changed forever.

Semons.com (edited)



Our Vision: "United in Christ we reach out to build loving relationships that deepen faith and enrich lives."

## Readings from the Lectionary

### Advent 4

Mic 5:2-51  
Lk 1:46b-55  
Or Ps 80:1-7  
Heb 10:5-10  
Lk 1:39-45, (46-55)

### Christmas Eve/Day

Is 9:2-7 Or Is 62:6-12 Or Is 52:7-10  
Ps: 96, 97, 98  
Tit 2:11-14 or Tit 3:4-7  
Or Heb 1:4, (5-12)  
Lk 2:1-14 (15-20) Or Lk 2:(1-7), 8-20  
Or Jn 1:1-14

### Christmas 1

1 Sm 2:18-20, 26  
Ps: 148  
Col 3:12-17  
Lk 2:41-52



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Members of the Leadership Team: Rev. Mike Fawcett, Ps. Yoy Alberastine, Kerry Lawson, Sherryl Smith, Andrew Telfer & Raelyn Punch

Halls Head Bendigo Bank details for electronic transfers:

A/C Name: Uniting Church in Australia-South Mandurah Congregation  
BSB: 633-000 A/C No: 117072207

It is optional whether you include your name as a reference for the payment.

## O Little Town of Bethlehem: A Story of Faith

One of my all time favourite Christmas hymns is "O Little Town of Bethlehem." It has been around since 1868. It is packed with emotion, a song about the Christ Child, born to Mary, a song filled with the creative power of God intervening in history with the gift of a saviour. It's a story where the divine and the human come together in an amazing but humble way.



What might surprise you is how this great hymn came to be. It was written by Phillips Brooks, Episcopal priest. Brooks was serving the Holy Trinity Church in the City of Brotherly Love (Philadelphia, PA). He had just returned from a trip to The Holy Land which inspired him to write the words. "When he returned to America he still had Palestine singing in his soul." (from Stories of Christmas Carols by Ernest K. Emurian, Baker Book House Co., page 97)

Brooks was a bachelor. His church organist and Sunday School superintendent, Lewis Redner was also a bachelor and Brooks gave the words to him and asked him to create a tune for the upcoming Christmas celebration. Redner procrastinated and struggled with the creation of a tune to go with the 5 stanzas that Brooks had written. It wasn't until the night before the celebration that Redner got inspired in the middle of the night and created the song as we know it. The following day a group of 36 children and 6 Sunday school teachers introduced the song created by the 2 bachelors. That was on December 27th, 1868. It wasn't published as an official hymn of the Episcopal Church until 1892. The following January, Phillips Brooks died, never knowing the magnitude of the hymn that he created.

For some reason the 5th stanza has been dropped from the original score. "Where children pure and happy Pray to the blessed Child, Where misery cries out to thee, Son of the mother mild; Where charity stands watching And faith holds wide the door, The dark night wakes, the glory breaks, And Christmas comes once more." The stanza includes the line, "And faith holds wide the door."

This hymn, like the story of the annunciation of Mary in the gospel of Luke, is a story about faith.

Keith Wagner, Real Hope (Edited)



### Merry Christmas

On behalf of the SMUC Leadership Team, our worship leaders and weekly speakers, we wish you and all your family and friends a Holy and Joyous Christmas. If you're travelling, we pray you arrive safely and we look forward to seeing you in the New Year.



*A very warm welcome is extended to any visitors. We trust that you will be blessed during this time of worship and invite you to fellowship with us after the service.*



## Update: 1st Quarter 2025 Enablers' List

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered for the Enablers' List for the 1<sup>st</sup> January to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 quarter. Unfortunately I've been a bit "under the weather" in recent weeks and may have missed some emails giving me the dates you're available. Please accept my apologies if you've sent an email and you have not received an acknowledgement, but could you please resend it.

If you haven't been on the Enablers' List previously, or have taken a break from the List, please join in. You can get more information from any of the Leadership Team.

Please email Peter at [prpunch@lasar.net.au](mailto:prpunch@lasar.net.au) by no later than **5pm Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December** advising which of the Enablers' roles you are happy to accept (greeting, flowers, morning tea, reader and/or kids church).

Please also consider joining our wonderful musicians, whether as a singer or playing an instrument. For more information contact Ken at M: 0417 955 149 or E: [kenneth.lehmann@bigpond.com](mailto:kenneth.lehmann@bigpond.com)



### Men's Coffee Fellowship Morning Teas

The next gentlemen's Espresso Morning Tea, scheduled for Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> December (Christmas Eve) has been cancelled. The date for the next men's coffee morning will be advised in the Messenger. For more information please contact Piet Speyers M: 0431 860 873



**Blessings & Congratulations To:**  
**Chris & Evelyn Ashley**  
Who Celebrated their 45<sup>th</sup> Anniversary  
On Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December



**Estelle Telfer** Saturday 28 December  
**God Bless and warm wishes**  
**To you upon your birthday**

### Pastoral Care

For pastoral care or spiritual guidance please contact:

**Rev. Mike Fawcett**

M: 0412 243 677

E: [fawcettmichael176@gmail.com](mailto:fawcettmichael176@gmail.com)



**OR** Any member of the leadership team (their names are overleaf)

### Your Messenger

If you are not receiving this Newsletter by email and wish to do so, please contact Peter at: [prpunch@lasar.net.au](mailto:prpunch@lasar.net.au)

Any articles, notices or prayer requests for the Messenger should be emailed to Peter no later than **5pm Wednesdays**

**Thank you**

