

# The Link



February 2012

Thornleigh Hillcrest  
Uniting Church Newsletter

# Immanuel - God is With Us

In his book *The God We Never Knew*, published in 1997, Marcus Borg describes his spiritual journey. Borg was raised in a small American town where most people attended a church. Borg's family were Lutherans and were at church every Sunday. As a child and then as a young person, Borg's impression of God was 'out there', 'up in heaven', in effect 'somewhere else'. However, over time, Borg came to the realisation that God is in fact all around us, not 'spatially distant from us'. God is 'right here', even as God is also more than just 'right here'. Supremely, we discover what God is like in the 'figure' (person) of Jesus Christ, 'the decisive disclosure of what God is like'.

One of the many names given to Jesus is Immanuel (or Emmanuel). Centuries before the birth of Jesus Christ, Isaiah was inspired to write (7:14 GNB) 'a young woman who is pregnant will have a son and will name him Immanuel'. Matthew (1:23) records Joseph's dream where Mary will 'become pregnant and have a son, and he will be called Immanuel (which means *God with us*)'.

The name Immanuel helps us to realise that God's presence is with us.

In the November/December 2010 issue of *Australian Leadership*, Graham Humphris, CEO/General Secretary of the Uniting Church in South Australia, outlines a Christmas sermon he once preached entitled 'Thank God You're Here with Me'. Humphris emphasises several 'doors' that we all go through at some point of our lives.

**The door of disappointment.** In most years, we feel disappointed either with ourselves, other people, some situation or even with life itself but, if we respond to God's love for us through Jesus Christ, then as we face disappointment, we will be able to say with absolute confidence 'thank God you're here with me'. To quote Humphris:

*'Christmas is all about the fact that God loves us. God can't get us out of his mind. And so God wrapped his love in flesh and blood and came to earth in Jesus to show us what God is like.'*

**The doors of desertion and devastation.** There are times when we feel deserted, isolated or even devastated and that no-one really understands what we are going through. But Jesus offers us friendship by someone who always understands as he experienced the harsh realities of life – born in a stable, living in a real world as a real person, knowing poverty, rejection, ridicule, abandonment, the death of loved ones, physical pain and more. Jesus is able to 'give us peace today in the midst of problems, instead of panic, peace that builds bridges in relationships instead of walls, peace that brings hope instead of despair'. Yes, Jesus understands what we are experiencing and so we can say with strong conviction, 'thank God you're here with me'.

In the New Testament book of James (4:8), we read, '*Come near to God and God will come near to you.*'

A great promise from God, a promise in which we can trust as God has come to our world in Jesus. This promise helps us to draw closer to God this year. As Graham Humphris says, 'Then you will be able to walk through whatever 'doors' come before you and say with absolute confidence

THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE WITH ME'.

David Richardson

## Church Family News

### **Remember in your prayers:**

Bruce Batten, Grace Cairns, Wendy Clark, Bruce and Norma Chambers, Hilda Clark, Jean Holmes, Jan Williamson, Rev Stephen Reid and his son, Luke, both recovering from serious illness;  
our missionaries – the Wakefield family in PNG and Richard & Lindsey Parker in South Africa; Pastor Will and Betty Pearson and our friends in Broken Hill.

## Elders' Gathering

All elders are encouraged to come to the Elders' Gathering on Saturday February 4 from 9am to about 12 noon in the youth room.

## Missionaries' Support in 2012

We are grateful for the ongoing faithful financial pledged support by some members of our congregation for the Parker and Wakefield families during this year. Any donations to their ministry may be placed in the weekly offering bags in envelopes clearly marked.

Jesus' example was radical. Over and over he tried to tell people to differentiate between tradition and truth – and he called them to follow the truth, which abolishes prejudice.

Jill Briscoe

# Birthdays

## February

2	Keith Wilson	19	Bruce Sharpham
6	Mikaela Wakefield	23	Allan West
9	Brenda Geary	24	Ann Reid
14	Anna Mathew Wilma Anantakrishnan	25	Bruce Williams
15	Bea Roche		
16	Ron Newton		
18	Heather Wilson		



## Woodworking Group

The Men's Woodworking Group meets each Monday from 9am at Jim Stowe's home at 8 Koorungal Avenue, Thornleigh. All men are welcome to come along and help/learn to make woodcraft items for sale at the annual market day. Bring your own safety gear (ear muffs, goggles etc) and lunch. For more info, ring Jim on 9484 6064.

## Bible Studies

About 25 people enjoyed fellowship together as they considered the subject of *Faith – Depending on God* in the last Bible study series in 2011. The first series of Bible studies in 2012 will commence at 9.30am and 7.30pm on **Wednesday February 22** with a study leading into Lent and to the Easter period. See the separate notice in this issue of *The Link* for details. During May and August 2012, it is planned that the DVD series of *What's So Amazing about Grace?* will be used as a basis for these Bible studies.

## Mingles

On Saturday January 28, the group enjoyed a barbecue dinner and planned the activities for the coming year. To kick things off, we're planning a picnic and walk at Crosslands reserve, Hornsby Heights on **Saturday February 25**. Please contact Jan and Steve Williamson for the details and meeting time.

## Cluster Group

The final Cluster Group activity for 2011 was in hosting a Christmas celebration dinner for all our church family on Saturday December 3. As well as sharing a meal, there was carol singing, a quiz, and devotional on the Christmas theme.

Saturday February 18 will be an opportunity to view the outstanding *Revelation Ceiling* with 20 panels depicting images from the book of Revelation in the Newtown Uniting Church. We will leave Thornleigh on the 1pm train; arrangements have been made for a guided 'tour' at 2.30pm.

If you would like to attend or would like further information, please let the Sharphams or Richardsons know as soon as possible.



## Worship Committee

At a well-attended meeting (40 present) on January 23, there was a full discussion about the possibility of moving from two services to one service on Sunday mornings. Many of those present, whether regular 8.45am or 10.15am attenders, indicated a strong desire for greater variety or flexibility in services and more lay participation where possible.

Whilst there was no overall consensus on the main issue of one or two services, it was decided to recommend to the Church Council (which in the UCA has the responsibility of determining the time and place of services of public worship) that consideration be giving to moving, for a trial period, to one morning service with the commencement date, time and review to be decided by the Church Council.

Rev Glen, our minister, in responding to the comments for variety and a more flexible approach in services, has suggested that those, who have ideas and/or themes and are willing to participate, make written suggestions to Shirley Richardson.

# Lent Event 2012

February 22 – 7 April 7

Lent Event is part of a movement that aims to help eliminate global poverty by challenging those of us who live in developed countries to re-evaluate our priorities.

Through Lent Event, we respond to God's call to share the gifts of God so that everyone is able to live a life of dignity: clean water, enough food, education, viable employment and good health.

In the 40 days leading up to Easter, participants forego an item or items from their daily lifestyle and donate the money saved for vital development work in Asia, Southern Africa and the Pacific through UnitingWorld Relief and Development. The activities of the projects are sustainable in the long term and are in response to needs expressed by the assisted communities.

Some of the programs that will be supported by this year's Lent Event include:

## **Community Development – Sarenga | India Church of North India**

The project provides support to school children in 10 villages in the Sarenga region to reduce the school dropout rate and increase literacy. The holistic support offered to the children includes a nutrition program, study materials, uniforms and recreational outlets to help to ensure children can receive maximum benefit from their education.

The project provides a community health and sanitation program and a supply of safe drinking water for villages.

## **Zimbabwe – HIV/ AIDS Education Methodist Church of Zimbabwe**

The area has experienced economic depression, political instability and endured HIV/AIDS and cholera epidemics. This project addresses the impact of HIV/AIDS by teaching vocational skills that can be used to generate income to support the 300 HIV/AIDS orphans who have been integrated into the community enabling the provision of access in to health care, education and essential goods for the orphans.

This project incorporates health awareness training for the whole community covering topics that include HIV/AIDS, water-borne diseases and good hygiene and sanitation practices.

## **Ambon, Indonesia – Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP)**

Between 1999 - 2003 in Ambon, Indonesia, Muslim and Christian communities were torn apart by prejudice, violence and killings. Young Ambassadors for Peace (YAP) has played a vital role in restoring peace through reconciliation workshops, mentoring programs and community education.

For further information, go to [www.lentevent.com](http://www.lentevent.com)

Melissa Mottram

**Uniting Church in Australia  
Synod of New South  
Wales and the ACT**

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**STAMP COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER  
JANUARY 2012**

**A Bumper Year**

Despite the decreasing supply of postage stamps, this year we have raised a record \$30,100. This brings the total raised since 1977 to \$613,247

Contributions of stamps have rolled in from all over the state. Thank you, keep up the effort. A number of people have also passed on their collections for us to sell. Some of these have been sold over the counter and some through auction.

Unfortunately Queensland Synod's stamp Committee had to close this year. We are grateful to them for forwarding their stock for us to sell.

Please chase up your local businesses for envelopes and keep those stamps rolling in.

Thanks to our loyal workers who come in each Tuesday and Friday to sort and sell stamps. Thanks also to those workers who come in from time to time to top up the stock books for overseas countries.

In an effort to fight the decrease in the use of the post we have come up with a new motto to encourage you to use the post and generate more stamps for us to sell.

**POST MAIL NOT EMAIL**

Tony Boughton,  
Secretary,  
Phone: 9481 8818

Sales for the year ending December, 2011 totalled \$30,100. Distribution of the donations totalled \$16,250. Donations have been made to the following projects in UnitingCare and Uniting Mission and Education (This replaces the Board of Mission and the Board of Education). The distribution of the balance of the funds will be processed in 2012.

### **UnitingCare**

- \$1,000 - Burnside, Central Coast - Gwandalan playgroup
- \$1,000 - Burnside, Central Coast - Warnervale Family and
- \$1,000 - Central Coast - Younger Onset Dementia Program
- \$1,500 - Newpin Centres - Cots and mattresses
- \$1,250 - Newpin Centre, Doonside - Holiday camp support
- \$ 600 Newpin Centre, Bidwell - Storage

### **Uniting Mission and Education**

- \$2,000 - Frontier Services, Wyndham - Wheelchairs
- \$2,500 - Berrigan & Savernake Churches - Audiovisual equipment
- \$700 - Camden Theological Library - purchase of two films
- \$1,500 - Pastoral Counselling Institute - fuel assistance for mobile unit.
- \$1,200 - Leadership Institute - Scholarship - leadership intensive course.
- \$1,000 - Dean of Candidates - Candidate support
- \$1,000 - North West Sector - Community Connection events

## **INFORMATION FOR TRIMMERS AND SORTERS**

Please keep your stamps coming in regularly. In general, stamps can be supplied to us on the envelopes, carefully torn off envelopes trimmed with 1/8" (3 mm) paper surround, or trimmed and sorted.

### **TRIMMING:**

Stamps trimmed from envelopes should have only 1/8", (3 mm) of paper surrounding them and be on one thickness of paper. Please Do Not trim down to the perforations as it makes it too hard to separate them from the paper Backing.

. When trimming or sorting, please discard any stamps, which

- have the perforations damaged in way,
- that are heavily cancelled, or
- that have been cancelled by biro or red Texta. (All of these render the stamp worthless).

Please leave the stamps on their backing paper. We get more For "on paper" stamps than "off paper" stamps. We can still sell off paper stamps but they bring in less revenue. If you have off paper stamps, send them in unsorted.

### **SORTING:**

Australian stamps are separated from overseas stamps and are then sold by weight in bulk, and as individual issues

A sorting sheet is available on application.

If you have a good supply of stamps they can be sorted into issues, smaller quantities can be sent in for the stamp room to sort.

Please, do not bundle stamps up using GLAD Wrap or rubber bands.

### **OVERSEAS:**

In dealing with overseas stamps, do not separate off paper and on paper

Please separate overseas stamps into (a) New Zealand, (b) Papua and New Guinea, (c) Pacific Islands, and (d) then put all other overseas countries into one lot.

We also sell used phone cards and used post cards.

## **WHAT DO WE NEED?**

WE NEED - People who are willing to learn. People who enjoy the congenial company of other people and are able to come to the city on a Tuesday or a Friday. We would be delighted to hear from you. Men and women are included in this Ministry of the Church.

WE NEED - People who are willing to help by collecting stamps and/or envelopes from various business places, which are prepared to donate them to US.

WE NEED - People who are willing to look after a stock book from a less common country. This is a task that can be done at home with infrequent visits to the Stamp Room.

WE NEED - More buyers. We sell common stamps in bulk. We cater for individual collectors: we have stock books of many countries with individual stamps for sale at very reasonable prices.

WE NEED - Stamps to be trimmed to 1/8 inch (3 mm) and left on paper.

The Stamp Room is located at Pilgrim House, 2nd Floor, 262 PittStreet, Sydney (near Park Street). It is open as follows:

Tuesday 8:30 am - 12 noon Bulk stamp sales and sales from stock books.

Friday 9:00 am - 12 noon Sales are from stock books only.

**Please note: this four-page centrefold can be pulled out and retained for your reference. Ed**

## LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

# Uphill Faith

## THE PASSION STORY

### Fill Your Tank For The Journey Ahead

“During the last hours of his life, Jesus climbed a hill called Golgotha. It was the place where common criminals were executed. The Saviour of the world willingly carried his own cross up that hill.

Immerse yourself in *The Passion Story* and you'll discover a source of spiritual fuel to help you face the steep inclines of your own life”

**All are invited to join in this six-week series of Lenten studies commencing on Wednesday February 22  
9.30 – 11am or 7.30 – 9pm**

Each session will be followed by sharing over a 'cuppa'

*“As you follow Jesus up the hill to Golgotha, you'll meet him in fresh, new ways and discover what it means to be his follower ... even in the most trying of times.”*

If you wish to attend please add your name to the form which will be in the vestibule.

# Parker Update

We were very blessed to have five days away in the **Drakensberg mountains** with Janine, Lindsey's sister. It was a good time of rest. Below: the beautiful view, and some mini-golf fun!



## Our Lord answers prayer ...

**Lindsey** Choosing the right doctor to deliver your baby can be a rather daunting task. It was my heart's desire to have a natural delivery, and doctors in this country are notoriously quick to deliver babies by caesarean. We asked the Lord to give us wisdom and lead us to the right doctor. He did just that and He gave me the desire of my heart! Six hours after my waters broke, the doctor on call (not our doctor) decided to induce labour as I had had no contractions. After three hours of induction, I had hardly dilated and Andrew's head had not moved down. The doctor then told us that she wanted to do a caesarean an hour later. We didn't feel at peace about it, and the midwife phoned our doctor. She came in, even though she wasn't on call, and said that all we needed was more time and she didn't think a caesarean was necessary. We laid hands on my baby bump and prayed that he would engage. And very soon after that he did! Andrew was born a few hours later. We praise the Lord for the blessing of a safe and normal delivery - we understand that it is a privilege that not all are able to experience. We are thankful that Andrew is healthy, and are overwhelmed by the knowledge that the Lord chose us to be parents to this precious soul.

Thank you to everyone who prayed for us, sent congratulations, and gifts. Our son wants for nothing. We have received so many special parcels from Australia!

Thank you for your continued prayers and support throughout this year. The Lord has shown His faithful hand of provision to us through your generosity. Please pray for continued support and good health for our growing family.

All our love

Richard, Lindsey and Andrew

Ed -The full Parker Times will be available on the website shortly

# The Turrumurra Passion

## **Experience the Timeless Easter Story**

Preparations for 14th year of The Turrumurra Passion are already underway. This is a great event to help you and your friends explore afresh the reality and meaning of Jesus' life.

Friday March 23 at 8 pm

Saturday March 24 at 7 pm

Friday March 30 at 8 pm

Saturday March 31 at 7pm

Monday April 2 at 8 pm

Tuesday April 3 at 8 pm

Wednesday April 4 at 8 pm

Tickets are free, but booking is highly recommended.

## **Bookings open February 1**

The website is constantly updated with new information.  
This now includes the play on video.

[www.turramurrapassion.org.au](http://www.turramurrapassion.org.au)



# Important Dates for 2012

**Congregational meeting**  
TBA



**Church council**  
February 15  
May 16  
August 15



**Elders' gathering**  
February 4

**Working bee**  
March 31



# Diary Dates

- **KYB** (Know Your Bible) meets at 10.30am each Monday.
- **Ashleigh Lodge Service** is on the third Sunday of the month at 11am.
- **Kids' Time** meets at 4-6pm on Mondays in school terms.
- **Indoor Bowls** meets on the first and third Mondays of each month at 1pm.
- **Day Fellowship** normally meets on the fourth Monday of the month at 1pm, and at other times for outings.
- **Men's Woodwork Group** meets on Mondays at 9am

## February

Sun 5        8.45am Worship (HC)– Rev G Renton  
                 10.15am Worship – Rev G Renton  
Sun 12       8.45am Worship – Rev G Renton  
                 10.15am Worship – Rev G Renton  
Sun 19       8.45am Worship (HC)– Rev G Renton  
                 10.15am Worship – Rev G Renton

**Wed 22       *The Link* deadline**

Sun 26       8.45am Worship – Rev G Renton  
                 10.15am Worship – Rev G Renton

## March

Sun 4        8.45am Worship (HC)– Rev G Renton  
                 10.15am Worship – Rev G Renton  
Sun 11       8.45am Worship – Rev G Renton  
                 10.15am Worship – Rev G Renton

# Grounds & Gardening

February 11-18        E Smith and S Wilcockson

February 25 - March 3    D Firth and A West