

From the Minister

Greetings and peace to you all!

Let us take a moment to take a deep breaths in and out for a few minutes.

Now as we know, we are officially entering the Advent and Christmas season, also known as the Busy Season, or as some call it, the Silly Season. It is the season when the joy of gathering, celebrating and reconnecting are mixed in with chaos of planning and logistics of getting everything organised. It is the time when we tried to fit all before the year ends.

Lately I have been caught up in the planning and organising and discerning my ministry. I had a couple meetings and discussion with my mentor and a professional supervisor and also have done a lot of preparation for the Advent and Christmas period and even for next year. There are a lot of questions of what would it be? And, what could it be? Some planning can be easy, but some can also be uneasy.

Recently, I attended the Presbytery in Council Meeting and aside from the elections of the office bearers for the coming years there was a group discussion about the *Faithful Futures* which is the vision of the way the church would go in the future. (You may check the Synod website and the table summary in this issue of NUCH for more information).

There were questions of what this might look like for our congregation or which direction would be relevant to any of the church communities in the room. For the communities who often caught up in the ordinary business regular activities, they may hardly have had a chance to reimagine the future.



In the past few weeks before the end of the Church Calendar, through the readings like Zacchaeus story, and the Prophetic messages in Gospel and Isaiah readings, God is inviting us to reflect inwardly and also outwardly. How do we see ourselves now or yesterday. In all those readings there is an invitation for us to see things in different perspective. Just the way God is inviting Zacchaeus to see life and the world around him differently thus it motivates him to change. The Prophetic readings from Isaiah also inviting us to re-imagine our future that is so unlike our current vision. God is inviting us to dare to plan, to think and to imagine something that is fresh and new. But most importantly God is inviting us to think about hope. There is always hope in the time when everything seems so dry, or when things are uncertain or unsettling. This something we can keep with us this month, and let us be assured that God is with us in every season

and journey, even in the planning room as we brainstorm.

This month when we journey through Advent and look forward Christmas, it may also be a time to both look back on how the year went for us both personally and collectively as a community and look ahead to the New Year. It is an invitation not only to plan but also to imagine what the different future could be.

I am truly hoping that I will get around for some more visitation this week onward. I would really like to catch up and get in touch with you. Perhaps it is a good reminder to all of us that we will have a massive service on the 7th December where we will have a Service of Confirmation for Evelyn Hanson and also Communion Service, then followed by our Congregational Christmas Lunch after morning tea. I am constantly thinking of you, especially many of you who are not in the best of shape at the present time. May God bless you with grace and delight, comfort and peace, joy and hope!

Kharis Abadani



Hampton Uniting Church



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www.hamptonunitingchurch.wix.com/hampton-ucc

WORSHIP Sundays 10am

SUPPLY MINISTER:

CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIR:

CHURCH COUNCIL SECRETARY:

ZOOM <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/4111712080> Passcode uevX6a

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Christmas Day Worship

Please note that our Worship service on **Christmas Day** Thursday 25 December will be held at **9:30am**

There will not be a morning tea on Christmas Day

Your Invitation to Christmas Dinner

Please join us for Christmas Dinner following Worship next Sunday 7 December

For catering purposes, please make sure you have let Margaret Ackland or Ian Menzies know of your intention to come and any dietary requirements.

A special occasion

Next Sunday's 10am communion service will include a celebratory Confirmation Service for **Evelyn Hanson**



Give a goat! Choose gifts that fight poverty and build hope from the **Everything In Common Gift Catalogue** which is available at <https://everythingincommon.com.au/>

Each gift card represents a project helping people lead lives of dignity and hope, and your purchase directly supports the work.

You can also purchase Christmas Card packs at the same website.



One \$15 pack contains eight assorted A5 size designs. The pack comes with eight recycled paper envelopes and the note inside cards reads:

"Wishing you the love, joy and hope of Christmas"

CHRISTIAN MEDITATION



Nurturing inner peace and deeper spiritual awareness
Mondays at 10 am

Please note our final day for 2025 will be Monday 15 December
We return in February 2026 on the first Monday, 2 February

Online giving

Online giving is a simple way to regularly contribute your weekly offering. It is quite straightforward to organise and many of our congregational members now take advantage of the service for their weekly offering.

You can too! Simply set up a Direct Debit as follows:

Westpac BSB 033 055 A/c No: 112 529
Hampton Uniting Church

Please identify your payment as "Offering". Thank you!

Christmas Holiday Worship arrangements

As was the case this year, with so many key leaders of the congregation and others planning on being away on holidays after Christmas, Church Council has determined that we will not be in a position to offer our 'usual' worship services. In lieu, Council is suggesting that members of the congregation 'visit the neighbours' within the proposed Bayside Cluster. Council thought it would be good if this was done 'en masse' and so makes the following suggestions:

In person attendance (all at 10am)

December 28	St Leonard's UC 50 New Street, Brighton Beach
January 4	Trinity Brighton UC 15 Black Street, Brighton
January 11	Sandringham UC 21 Trentham Street, Sandringham
January 18	St Leonard's UC 50 New Street, Brighton Beach
January 25	Charman UC <i>(currently at St Andrew's by the Sea)</i> 542 Balcombe Road, Black Rock

Normal services will resume at Hampton on February 1, 2026

Or try viewing the online services at:

St Leonard's UC (via YouTube at 10am, or any other time)
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9CcPZAoAYjj_VCsxEexlg/live

Charman UC (via Zoom, 10am Sundays)
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85247373230?pwd=WlM2UHJEmFWS3RScnNqM3puaGdZdz09#success>

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the congregation is being planned for Sunday March 1, 2026 following the morning worship service. Featured on the Agenda will be the Annual Reports for 2025 and approval of the Budget for 2026.

It is anticipated that these Reports and further details will be published in NUCH for perusal prior to the meeting.



Christmas Bowl

As usual, our offering on Christmas Day will go to the Christmas Bowl Appeal as will proceeds from our Christmas luncheon on December 7.

On Christmas Day there will be a separate bowl at the ramp entry for donations to the Christmas Bowl Appeal. Donation envelopes will also be available in the church porches during December. If forwarding a cheque, please make it payable to *Act for Peace*. Should you wish to donate online Hampton's direct account with Act for Peace is mycb.link/46209

Account Name: Act for Peace Ltd.

BSB: 012 332 Account No. 232375215

Reference No: 46209 Hampton Uniting



Gifts for the Christmas Bowl Appeal will support sharing partners around the world providing refugees with vital food, care and lifesaving support. Donations enable you to stand alongside local communities as they contribute to a more secure future for them. Please support the 2025 Christmas Bowl Appeal.

Your gifts will be greatly appreciated.

Birthday greetings

Celebrating birthdays coming up after Christmas:

Alan Wynne on 29 December

Roger Cannington on 12 January

Heather Humphrey on 27 January

... and belated birthday greetings for this past week to:

Dorothy Brownbill (Sunday 23 November)

and **Ian Menzies** (Wednesday 26 November)

Sammy Stamp

It is amazing how much money is raised and distributed through Sammy Stamp. Please keep the stamps from the mail you receive this Christmas season.

Would you please cut them from the envelopes leaving approximately 14mm around the stamp and pop them into the boxes in the main entry or ramp entry porches during December or when we return in February. This would be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

St Leonard's opens its new facilities

There was much celebration at St Leonard's Brighton Beach Uniting Church when their new Foyer and renovated facilities were officially opened on November 9.



The facilities now include a new entry Foyer that links the 'old' and now renovated church (far left, above) with the 'new', fish-shaped church (right, above).



Architecturally, the Foyer ceiling design echoes a fishing net, in a nod to the architecture of the 'new' church (which when viewed from above is in the shape of a fish; the font being the symbolic 'eye' of that design). Cleverly, the new Foyer only lightly 'touches' the 'old' church with just clear glass, allowing light to flow to its windows and allowing the original exterior wall, which is now interior, to be clearly 'read'.



A 'coffee bar' forms part of the Foyer, which includes an Office Reception area, the new doorways into the 'old' church – now a multi-purpose room – and into the sanctuary.



The new entry into the church sits under the choir and balcony area and allows external sight-lines into the sanctuary.



Main hall



The 'old' church is now a new, multi-purpose room



A new kitchen now opens into the main hall alongside the tennis courts at the rear of the site. Also renovated were the toilets and exteriors of the existing buildings. An upgrade to the manse next door is planned for 2026, following the retirement of the current minister, Rev Kim Cain.



The official opening was conducted by St Leonard's oldest member, 101 year-old Mrs Valerie O'Byrne, and dedicated by the General Secretary of the Synod, Rev Dr Mark Lawrence.

Photography courtesy of David Johnson, from Charman UC's weekly newsletter



LECTIO DIVINA

Our Lectio Divina group will meet for their final gathering this year at 2 pm on Wednesday 14th December in the Parish Centre Foyer

They will reconvene on 11th February

ALL WELCOME

Presbytery meeting

The final meeting for the Presbytery for this year was conducted on Wednesday November 19, commencing with worship in the outdoors. This idyllic, early evening worship service was led by Rev Ian Ferguson from Glen Waverley UC. A reading and harmonic singing set the excellent atmosphere for the following meeting.

The agenda was led very efficiently by Chair David Higham and included the acceptance of the Synod's *Faithful Futures* 2026-2031 goals as outlined below. The strategic direction of this vision was the major item for discussion for table groups, led by Phil McCredden from Ecclesia Leadership, during which we sought to discern the direction of God's leadership and pondered our rationale. This was a lively time of careful listening and sharing, with all responses gathered as feedback of perspectives and ownership of the *Faithful Futures* vision within our Presbytery.

Other business items included the Treasurer's report, which included an estimated budget that forecasts a deficit of \$35,000 (cf \$5,000 this year), and an election of Office Bearers for the various committees and roles within Presbytery. All nominees were accepted, resulting amongst other appointments in the continuation of David Higham as Chair for a further two years, and Anne Kim as Secretary for five.

An early, and again generous supper was enjoyed by all.

Alisa Drent



Shared Vision

Following Christ, walking together as First and Second Peoples, seeking community, compassion and justice for all creation.

Shared Goals



NEW COMMUNITIES OF FAITH:

Establish at least five new Christian communities by 2030.



COORDINATED MINISTRIES:

Coordinated ministry and mission in geographic areas such as Local Government Areas by 2030; attentive to renewing discipleship, and to the life and needs of the local context.



ALL-AGE GROWTH:

To have at least one all-age community of faith that is interactive, diverse, inclusive and transformative in 80% of Coordinated Ministries by 2030.



RESPECTING COUNTRY:

Honouring the Church's Covenant with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, all communities of faith will listen to and be able to tell about some of the histories of the Country on which they are located by the end of 2028, and be invited to develop local and appropriate ways to respond.



INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP:

- be providing appropriate intercultural leadership formation and equipping for all ministry agents and congregations; and
- develop intercultural networks for worship, witness and service.

Presbyteries and the Synod working together with shared goals and responsibilities, helping to relieve burdens and strengthen mission opportunities as we follow Christ together.



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Scan the QR code
to visit the Faithful
Futures page



Christmas in the Middle Ages

The festive season in medieval Christendom included many traditions that are not echoed in the current celebrations, and a few that are. Festivities extended from December 1 to at least January 6 and for some as late as Candlemas, a Christian feast day on February 2 commemorating the presentation of the baby Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem.

Serve up the boar

Christmas and New Year coincided with the hunting season for wild boar, at least in medieval England where it ran, similar to today's hunting season there, from September 8 to February 4.



Boar's head being eaten at a medieval dinner. Wikipedia, CC BY

References to boars' heads at feasts of the period are common. A recipe from the 1420s associated with the master chef of Savoy, Chiquart, gives detailed instructions for decorating the heads in bright colours. They were then paraded breathing flame (courtesy of a candle, camphor, and spirits) as part of the dinner spectacle.

A famous procession of the boar's head around Christmas time was associated with Queen's College, Oxford, from the 14th century. This honoured a student who had unexpectedly encountered a boar in the woods and, with great presence of mind, dispatched it with a copy of the works of Aristotle he was carrying.



A medieval feast, circa 1290-1300. British Library

A Christmas feast of codlings and eels

References to the word Christmas only begin in the 11th century to indicate the first service of the day as Christ's mass. The four weeks of Advent were established by Pope Gregory the Great in the 6th century. These were designated as a period of fast, so in dietary terms fish predominated.



Feast of the bean king 1640/1645 by Jacob Jordaens. Peter Horree/Alamy.com

In 1289, the Bishop of Hereford served a Christmas Eve meal to his guests of herring, five conger eels, 30 codlings and an expensive salmon, bread and wine. Christmas itself was given the status of a feast, and this was extended up to the Feast of the Epiphany, the visit of the three kings, on January 6. This made the twelve days of Christmas a period of holiday for all medieval Christians, and one where meat could be eaten.

Deck the halls

Christmas trees are a post-medieval innovation – which became popular in some European countries in the 17th century, via the German wife of George III, but didn't really catch on in Britain until the 19th when it was made popular by Queen Victoria and her German husband Prince Albert.

Medieval Christmas was not, however, without festive greenery: bay leaves, rosemary, holly, ivy and mistletoe were all used as decoration. This is similar to the Roman celebration of Saturnalia (December 17-23) over which the Christian Christmas festive season lay.

The nativity play

Strange as it may sound the idea of reenacting the nativity scene had to wait until the third decade of the 13th century. It seems to have been the brainchild of St Francis of Assisi, founder of the Franciscans. Francis was famous for his sermons not only to people but to also to animals.

In 1223 Francis happened to be in the town of Greccio, Italy, for Christmas, and asked for permission from the pope, in case he was thought to be making light of the Christmas story, to set up a manger full of hay, to bring an ox and a donkey, and to hold a service in front of it that evening. He preached to the townspeople who had gathered around, and a soldier among them became convinced he could see the holy infant sleeping in the manger. And the nativity tableau was born.

The Paston Family's Christmas

A remarkable account of medieval Christmas celebrations can be found in an English letter dated to Christmas Eve 1459. It was written by Margaret Paston, a wealthy Norfolk gentlewoman, landowner and prolific letter writer, to her husband, John. The original letter is now in the British Library and a modern transcription can be read online.



In 1459, the Paston family very likely attended their parish church of St Peter Hungate in Norwich. The festival lasted until Twelfth Night in the first week of January, or sometimes until Candlemas in early February.

Advent, the 40 days leading up to Christmas, was a period of fasting, abstinence and penance. Yet, from the autumn, Margaret would have been preparing for the banqueting that lay at the heart of the festival, ensuring that enough food and drink would be available for the duration.

Turkey wasn't yet on the menu – it only became a staple in the 20th century. But goose or a boar's head might form a suitable centrepiece, or even swan (we know Margaret kept a herd of her own). This would be served alongside a wealth of other provisions including beef, pork, mutton and game, herring and eel, bread and cheese and pies, puddings and cakes. Ale and wine would accompany the food. Some of this largess would be shared with the poor in the parish, as charity was seen as an important Christian virtue.

Homes would be adorned with ivy, holly and mistletoe, as well as laurel, conifers and bay. Yule logs burned and tapers were lit.

Carolling was a popular activity that involved dancing as well as singing. Gifts would be exchanged during the festive season, but more typically at New Year rather than on Christmas day.

However, in 1459, the Paston family's revels were muted and their home may well have remained undecorated. This was because only the previous month, Margaret's wealthy relative, Sir John Fastolf, had died. Her husband was his principal beneficiary, and the family were in mourning.



Margaret and John Paston

Margaret found herself in a quandary. How to combine a suitable period of grief with the seasonal festivities? Conscious of the family's sudden elevation in social standing owing to Sir John's death, she consulted more elevated friends. Her letter to her husband, outlining the advice she has received, makes for interesting reading.

Margaret was warned there should be no "harp nor lute playing, nor singing, nor any loud pastime". She was also instructed to avoid "dressing up", which may refer to the amateur theatrical performances known as "mummers' plays", or to performances put on by members of the household. We know from later family correspondence that the family and their servants put on plays featuring St George, Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham.

Instead, Margaret's connections recommended that the family's entertainments should be restricted to boardgames – namely chess, "tables" and cards. Chess has its origins in India and Persia over 1,500 years ago and was extremely popular in Europe by the later Middle Ages. Tables was a version of backgammon.

The family are likely to have also played "triumph", an early ancestor of whist. Remarkably, Margaret's reference to playing cards is the earliest recorded reference to the activity in England.

In its list of prohibited as well as permitted activities, her letter provides a unique insight into seasonal domestic recreations for the wealthy gentry class in medieval England.

Yet if Margaret was preoccupied with ensuring the correct etiquette was followed, her own celebrations were overshadowed less by the death of her kinsman than by the absence of her husband, who was either in London or at his newly inherited castle in Caister on the Norfolk coast. She signs off her letter to John Paston: "I consider myself half a widow because you shall not be at home."

Selections from articles in *The Conversation*
23 December, 2021 and 17 December, 2024



Margaret Paston (née Mautby or de Mauteby; c. 1422/1423–1484) was an English gentlewoman and one of the foremost authors of the Paston Letters, with over 100 surviving letters attributed to her.

Wake up!

A reflection on Matthew 24: 36-44

And suddenly, they were swept away! Out of nowhere it was upon them, catching them unprepared and without protection. Some were taken and some were left behind. Some were lost and some were saved. Stay awake!

Is this today's scripture, or today's news? Massive storms ripping through unsuspecting towns, floods and fires and tsunami-force waves submerging entire regions – are these simply natural occurrences, the consequence of large air masses radically changing temperature and colliding, or the advent of Jesus?

Traditional end-times theology, which would have us watching the skies with anxious hope for Jesus to come back and clean up this mess we've gotten ourselves into – and judge us for doing, or not doing, what we should have been doing – has never sat easily with me. It just doesn't sound like the same Jesus who walked beside us, got down in the mess with us, saying again and again, "Fear not." Threatening punishment if I don't shape up and fly right sounds more like ... well, me.

Which leaves me to wonder, maybe the coming devastation spoken of in scripture is no threat. Maybe Jesus simply is describing the way things go when we live out of alignment. Maybe the coming crises of creation, and whether or not we will see what's happening and wake up, are of premier significance—the kind of significance we could call salvation and not be exaggerating. Maybe our salvation, which is nothing less than the fulfilment of the incarnation, is integrally tied to whether or not we wake up and see what Jesus sees, or whether or not we just keep snoozing as the burglar breaks into our house.

If we know what's coming, Jesus says, surely we will stay awake.

If we know what's happening, surely we will pay attention.

Won't we?

from the blog at Inward/Outward



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NUCH holiday

This is the last issue of NUCH for the year. We hope you enjoy a Merry Christmas with family and friends and have a safe and Happy New Year in 2026. We return in February...



Rosters

December

Worship

December 21

Kharis Abadani

Various

Communion

Margaret Ackland

Lectionary

December 7

Isaiah 11:1-10

Gail Dinning

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 Romans

Colour: Purple

15:4-13

Matthew 3:1-12

December 14

Isaiah 35:1-10

Sue Dowling

Psalm 146:5-10

Colour: Purple

Jasher 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

December 21

Isaiah 7:10-16

Nine lessons and carols

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Colour: Purple

Romans 1:1-7

Matthew 1:18-25

December 25

Isaiah 9:2-7

Christmas Day

Psalm 96

Ailsa Drent

Titus 2:11-14

Colour: White

Luke 2:1-14-20

January

We are 'visiting the neighbours' at:

December 28

St Leonard's UC

50 New Street, Brighton Beach

January 4

Trinity Brighton UC

15 Black Street, Brighton

January 11

Sandringham UC

21 Trentham Street, Sandringham

January 18

St Leonard's UC

50 New Street, Brighton Beach

January 25

Charman UC

(St Andrew's by the Sea)

542 Balcombe Road, Black Rock

February

Services resume at Hampton Sunday 1 February

The Last Word

Dear Santa, I've been good all year.

Well, most of the time.

OK. Once in a while.

Oh, never mind. I'll buy my own stuff.

