

Kirwan Uniting Church

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We aspire to be a people of God led by the Holy Spirit, to practice and spread the love of Jesus Christ!

Keeping in Touch

21 April 2024

welcome!

We welcome all visitors with us today and pray your time with us will be a blessed one. Stay for morning tea after the service!



9 AM Service

Preacher: David Beck

Reader: Helen Beck

Bible Readings:

- Acts 4:5-12
- Ps 23 1
- Jn 3:16-24
- Jn 10:11-18



Ramble for Good Shepherd

Sheep are popularly imagined to be dumb creatures, easily led, easily picked off one by one by predators because (it is wrongly thought) they scatter in all directions at any alarm.

Of course, this picture of a solitary, scattered, sheep is what Christians fasten on to. Like today's Psalm 23, The Lord is *my* Shepherd. Or Luke 17, we cast ourselves as the lone lost sheep, sought out at great cost by the Great Shepherd. And yes, praise God, it has been a most wonderfully comforting picture, held in front of countless believers as they navigate their own Valley of the Shadow of Death. We have a unique, personal relationship with the Shepherd. If we consider at all that sheep are in a communal flock, the Shepherd cares for the whole fold, it is only in the context of all going astray.

But it turns out that sheep aren't that stupid after all. It's not only "Arold, that most dangerous of animals, a clever sheep", but a rigorous, long term, academic study reveals that when perceived danger looms, far from scattering in all directions, in fact they coalesce around the centre of the flock. To map this ovine behaviour to Christian believers, instead of wandering the Valley of the Shadow by ourselves, we seek the encouragement, love, and prayer and practical support of our faith community. But don't we then lose sight of our Shepherd, surrounded as we are by fellow sheep? No. Because who is at the centre of that community? Revelation 7:

For the Lamb at the centre of the throne
will be their shepherd;
he will lead them to springs of living water.
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Let's pray.

Loving God. Your Son, the Great Shepherd, has sought me and saved me, at the cost of His own life. And He has restored me to a community of the redeemed. May I love them as He has loved me. Keep my ears alert for His voice. For the voice which has called me by my own name because I am His. And the voice which will one day call me away from the Valley of the Shadow to a banqueting table prepared for me and for a great multitude which no-one can number. In your house. For ever. Amen.

Richard

Roster - 28 April 2024	
PREACHER:	Esteban Lievano
READER:	
GREETER:	Deb Egan
OFFERING:	Sharon Elvins & Kathy Reid
ANNOUNCEMENTS:	Anne Holmes
MORNING TEA:	Jenny, Maria & Ruth
FLOWERS:	Amelia Palu

This Week	
MONDAY:	House of Jonah
TUESDAY:	Fellowship
WEDNESDAY:	Bible Study
Bible Study resumes Wednesday 24th April at 7.30 pm. We will start our 'Prayer' series to be led by Kira.	

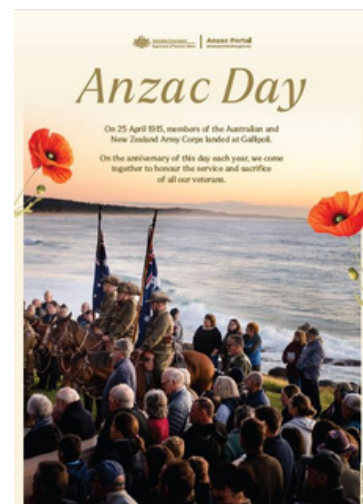
ANZAC Day service

Hervey Range ANZAC Day service, honouring our fallen defence force members from Gallipoli and other campaigns, is at 10 am on Thursday in the grounds of the Community Hall, a km or so on the left past the Tearooms turnoff.

The usual refreshments will be available afterwards. If you haven't already planned to attend a different venue, come along. This might be your only chance all year to sing God Defend New Zealand!



Richard



Written by Rev Sharon Hollis, President of the Uniting Church in Australia

This week, many of us will hear Psalm 23 read in our worship services. It is a psalm that speaks of God's goodness, God's mercy and God's provision. It is a psalm that has been prayed for millennia by the people of Israel. It is a prayer Jesus prayed as he grew up and went about his ministry.

It is also a prayer that speaks of suffering so profound it is experienced of the darkest valley.

"The witness of Easter is that our darkest valleys are lit by the mercy of God who comes not as one removed from the suffering of the world but as One who has walked this darkest valley before us and has transformed the darkness."

We come to the psalm this week with the shadow of death, fear and suffering all around us. And we wonder where God is. Are we forsaken? How will we live in the face of violence, death and despair?

We think of the darkest valley that those who were killed in a shopping centre in Bondi, those who were wounded and those who witnessed the violence are walking through.

We remember the priests and people of Christ the Good Shepherd Church who seek peace and forgiveness in response to the violence in their sacred meeting space.

We call to mind the people of Ballarat struggling with the violent death of three women, and women and non-binary people everywhere who wonder if they are safe to go about their daily business.

We think of those in our communities with mental illness; who will now fear how they are seen, will worry that people will turn from them afraid they too might be violent. They walk this dark valley daily.

Ever before us is the darkest valley of Gaza, the war in Ukraine, violence, war and hunger in countries we barely hear of where people suffer without end in sight.

The witness of Easter is that our darkest valleys are lit by the mercy of God who comes not as one removed from the suffering of the world but as One who has walked this darkest valley before us and has transformed the darkness. The One who cried at the grave of a friend, prayed for suffering to pass him by, laid down his life, died with a cry of God forsakenness on his lips. This One walks with us in the darkest valley and calls us to love and peace.

Because we walk through the darkest valley with the Holy One who has trod this path before us, we can hope that maybe, just maybe, healing will come to brokenness, we will see peace where it seems hopeless, those most in need will know mercy.

Because we walk through the darkest valley with the Holy One who has trod this path before us, we can hope that maybe, just maybe, we will find ourselves comforted and made whole and can participate in God's healing of a broken world.

I encourage us all to continue holding our nation and world in prayer and to hold each other in loving care.

If you are distressed or need support at this time, reach out to:

[Lifeline](#)

24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services.

13 11 14

[Beyond Blue](#)

Mental health support for anyone in Australia.

1300 224 636

[13YARN](#)

A free, confidential and culturally safe service managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

13 92 76