

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

As we step out of lockdown darkness into the light of the festive season, we acknowledge the fragility, loneliness, and grief we endured throughout the year. We also realised that we were resilient, adaptable, and creative during such difficult journey.

In the days leading to Christmas, let us reflect on the coming of Christ into our world with anticipation and hope. Let us draw deeply from the hope, peace, and love of God. Scripture reminds us that:

"The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory of a father's only son, full of grace and truth." (John 1:9,14)

Georges River Presbytery welcomes all to worship and celebrate together this Christmas. Find the closest Uniting Church congregation to you and join in with God's people to celebrate the Word of God that became flesh in the baby born in a manger in Bethlehem. Merry Christmas!



Uniting Church
 GEORGES RIVER PRESBYTERY

Presbytery office: (02 9579 4682)

Office hours: Mon-Fri 10am-4pm

georgesriver.uca.org.au

This Christmas message will appear in the Leader and the Torch newsletters on Wednesday 15 December. It invites the community to look on our website to find the dates and times of Christmas services held at local Uniting Churches. Please ensure you send the details of your Congregation Christmas services in to the office admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au to be included on the website.

ADVENT PRAYER AWAKEN US

Dear Lord God,
 awaken us,
 that we may be ready
 when your dear Son
 comes,
 that we may receive
 him with joy and serve
 you with pure hearts;
 through Jesus Christ
 our Lord. Amen.

*Source: Die pommersche
 Kirchen-Ordnung und
 Agenda, p. 282. Translated for
 A Collection of Prayers.*

GEORGES RIVER PRESBYTERY

georgesriver.uca.org.au

18 The Avenue,
 Hurstville NSW 2220

02 9579 4682

admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

PASTORAL LETTER

Rev. Graham Olsen

2021 will be remembered as a year unlike any other. Whatever its origin, this pandemic has had a profound impact on the world's people.

Thankfully, changes are happening, and there is the hope that 2022 will be significantly different with life returning to some form of normality.

However, alongside the COVID 19 pandemic, has been a pandemic of fear. People of all ages and from all walks of life have found themselves living with unprecedented levels of fear. Sadly, the fruit of this has been less than positive in the lives of individuals, families and the wider community.

However, in the midst of the circumstances and situations of everyday life, the people of God are called to live courageously. But the question is, how can we live with courage, peace and confidence in the midst of a frightening world?

The only way is to remember that the Lord, who is God, has promised to strengthen, help, and uphold us, and that he always keeps his Word. You see, when we are in the hands of the almighty God, we can face whatever comes our way. Our confidence is not in ourselves.. but in God!

In II Chronicles we read of a time when Jehoshaphat was 'terrified' at what was confronting him. Without doubt, a perfectly natural response! But what did he do? How did he respond? Well, his very first response was to turn his eyes to the Lord his God! Verse 20 says: 'We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you ...'.

While the elevated levels of fear and anxiety can bring feelings of helplessness — let's always remember the truth that we are never hopeless as long as there is a living God! Our first response needs to be to look away from what we see and feel, to the One whom we cannot see!

It's also helpful to look back as recall the faithfulness of our God on other occasions! 'Our God our help is ages past', as we sometimes sing. A reminder of what God has done in the past, can be a springboard to greater faith and trust in the here and now.

As we all know well, fear can paralyse and debilitate us. However, it is an emotion and can be overcome! We can choose to bow to fear or choose faith! Jehoshaphat said, 'You will deliver us ...'. Let this be our prayer! In difficult and trying times, the affirmation of our faith is critically important and has profound results!

In the midst of whatever we are going through, our eyes and ears need always be open to see and/or hear what God might be saying to us. Our God, is an encourager. Through the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord said: '... fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.'

Let us never forget to give thanks for what God is going to do — by faith! There is something exciting about being helpless and watching God act! The reality is that God always intervenes when his people trust him. Jehoshaphat said, 'We will succeed ...'. God acted on behalf of those who waited for him to speak and then obeyed.

In walking through Advent, Christmas and into the new year, like Jehoshaphat, may our eyes be firmly on the One we can't see, but who is fighting for us!

PRAYER

Gracious Father, in the midst of all we are experiencing in these times, we ask you to help us to follow the example of your servant Jehoshaphat of old, and consciously and deliberately turn our eyes away from what we see, to the One whom we cannot see but in whom we trust. Help us we pray, not to bow to fear, but in your strength and by your grace, to choose faith.

We pray in the Name of Christ our living Lord.

Amen.

MISSION PLANNING

MISSION & STRATEGY COMMITTEE

Among congregations who are engaging in mission planning, despite the lockdown, are Menai-Illawong, Rockdale and Sutherland Uniting Churches.

- Menai-Illawong UC - New steps were taken by Rev Graham Lawrence and the Menai-Illawong congregation in their mission planning, intentionally working in groups to 'stepping (to the future) in various ways': youth and families stepping out to grow; new leadership stepping up; senior members to step alongside younger leaders and members to mentor, encourage and pray - together exploring new possibilities for church.

- Rockdale UC Mission Plan is being implemented beginning with the JNC going through the process of having conversations with potential candidates for the leading Minister position while continuing on their property re-development project supported by a team from Presbytery and Synod.
- Sutherland UC - After receiving the Mission Planning Report earlier in the year, Sutherland congregation re-engaged on its final steps, fine tuning the Mission Plan. This exercise will take a few more sessions to complete a roadmap to help the congregation in God's mission to the community in the Sutherland Shire. Here are some of the photos taken during the group table session last Sunday (4th December 2021).



IDEAS TO INSPIRE

Assembly Circles Advent Gifts

A Gift from the Assembly Circles

For many of us, the birth of Christ will have special meaning this year. After the challenges of 2021, we gladly anticipate and prepare for the the coming of God's hope, peace joy, and love, dwelling among us. As you prepare for the Advent Season, the Assembly Circles of Interest are sharing the joy by contributing a "gift" each day to help you plan or prepare for worship, or to mark the Advent season in a prayerful and reflective way.

Each day until Christmas a new "gift" will appear below. They will include prayers, songs, poems, reflections or resources. To receive the gift delivered to your inbox each day, join any one of our [Assembly Circles of Interest](#).

Mission planning at Sutherland
Uniting Church



Church Banking Update

Cheques being phased out

All Treasurers and Secretaries should have received an email from Linda Johnson (Uniting Financial Services) on Friday 19 November about the phasing out of cheques. Please note that this means you will not be able to make payments of any kind using UFS cheques after 30 June 2022. Please ensure all

your payments are set up to be paid online by direct debit prior to that date. Further, if you receive any UFS cheques, please bank them promptly, so that they are cleared by the end of July 2022. If you need any help with this or have a question, please contact Barbara Moore

BarbaraM@nswact.uca.org.au

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you his peace at all times and in every situation. The Lord be with you all.

2 Thessalonians 3:16

Youth and Young Adult Retreat 2022

A vibrant, colorful poster for the Youth and Young Adult Retreat 2022. The background features abstract shapes in blue, yellow, orange, and purple. The text is bold and playful. At the top, it says '4-6 FEB 2022' in large white letters on a blue background, followed by 'CHITTICK LODGE / GERRINGONG / NSW SOUTH COAST' in smaller white letters. Below this, the main title 'RETREAT YOURSELF' is written in large, bold, blue letters with a white outline. To the right of the title, there is a yellow circle with the text '#RY22' in blue. Below the title, there is a quote: 'It's fun, vibrant, full of summertime energy! A great place to gather and get powered up ready for the year. Be welcomed, feel like you belong, and be challenged in your walk with Jesus.' To the left of this quote is a white outline of a guitar. Below the quote, it says 'REGISTER HERE:' and 'Registrations close 24 Jan 2022'. At the bottom, there is a blue button with the text 'retreatyourself.uca.org.au'. On the right side, there is a section for pricing: 'Earlybird cost \$150 for the weekend until 31 Dec 2021' and 'Full price \$180'. At the very bottom, there are logos for 'pulse', 'Uniting Church SYNOD OF NSW & ACT', and 'CHRISTIAN STUDENTS UNITING'. A small note at the bottom right says: 'Limited numbers of partial and full subsidies are available - contact the PULSE team for these. Congregations and Presbyteries are encouraged to financially support their Young Adult cohort to enable them to attend, and will have the capacity to make donations to support the camp/sponsor a YA to attend.' The overall design is modern and energetic, reflecting the 'summertime energy' mentioned in the text.

UPCOMING DATES

Material is required one week prior to meeting dates

PRC

7 December 2021

Mission & Strategy Committee

9 December

Standing Committee

14 December

Presbytery Meeting

15 February

Property Committee

TBA

Outreach Event from Lakemba Uniting Church

Friday 10th,
Saturday 11th
December
7pm - 9pm



ESTHER KING OUTREACH

Lakemba Uniting Church

69 Haldon St, Lakemba

Friday 10th - Sing along

Saturday 11th - Outreach Service

*Esther through her unique presentation of singing and preaching
takes the 'Good News' to communities and institutions.
Contact Rev Graeme Watkins: 0424 191 136*

POSITIONS VACANT

Family Worker

10 hours per week

Lugarno - Peakhurst
Uniting Church.

For further details please
contact the Church Council

Chairperson

Pamela Hanna

pjhanna080646@gmail.com

0418 642 171

Executive

Assistant

Full time

Georges River Presbytery

The Executive Assistant manages the everyday operations and functions of the Presbytery office to provide consistent administrative support to the Presbytery, the leadership, its committees (and congregations where appropriate). The Executive Assistant is a primary support for the Presbytery Mission and Leadership Minister, the Presbytery Pastoral Relations Minister and the Business Manager.

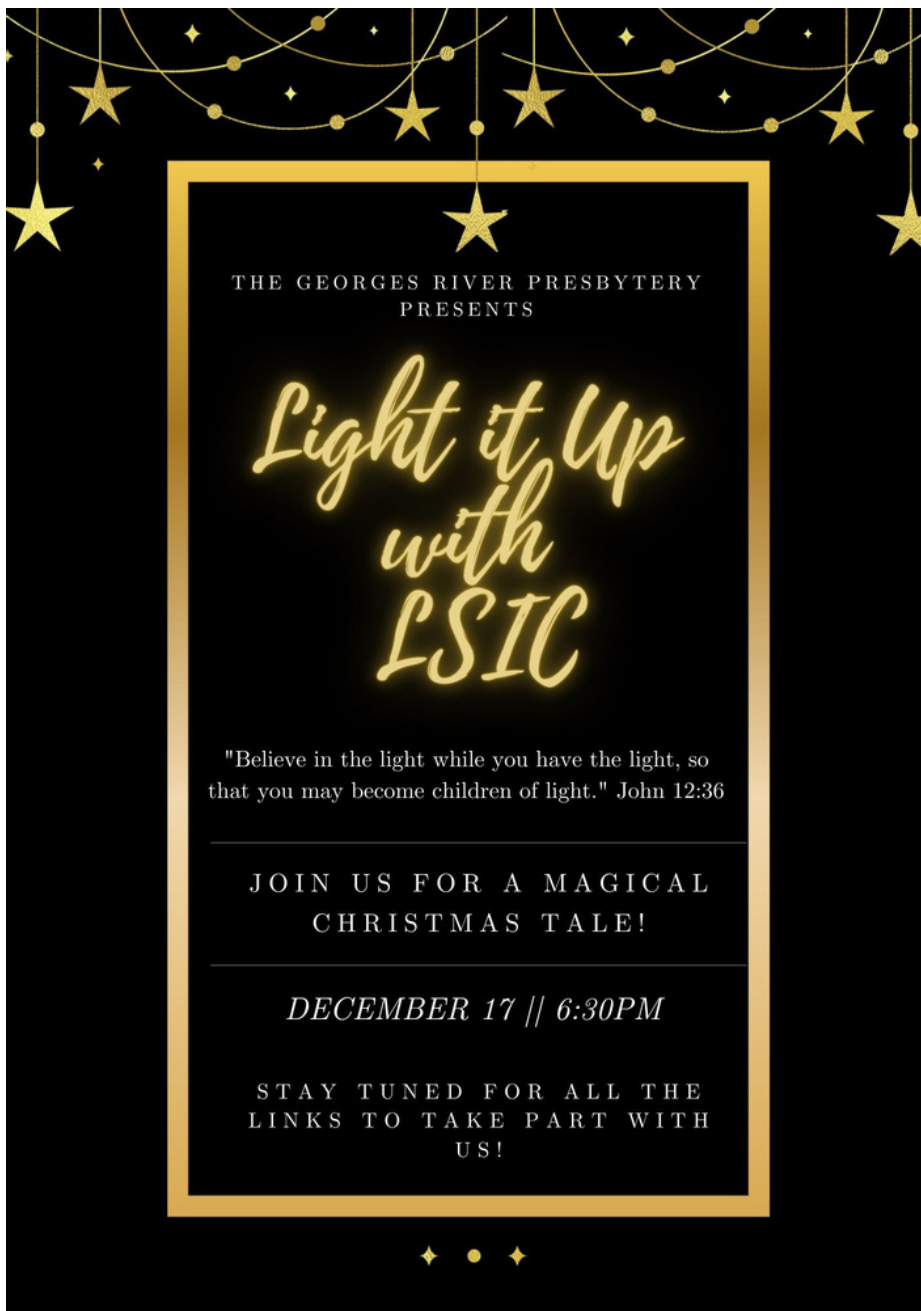
Applications via Christian
Jobs Australia.

<https://www.christianjobs.com.au/jobs/95028854-executive-assistant-at-georges-river-presbytery>



Living Streams in Christ (LSiC)

Presbytery Youth Movement Known As Living Streams In Christ (LSiC)




LSiC has created a website where you can submit prayer request - "Pray for me"
Also check out their Facebook and Instagram pages.

Pray for me

Providing an opportunity to unravel and have someone pray over your hardships, challenges, thoughts and prayer requests.

Reflection
Requests received: 7
Strengths: Providing this confidential platform, open to all, opportunity for young people to strengthen their relationship with God through prayer, access to Uniting Care Crisis support services.
Challenges: Awareness, well known, free website (limited content development)
Opportunities: Prayer Workshop run by Pastoral Care, response made available, Prayer Team gathering bi-monthly or quarter.
Next Steps: Better promotion, building the Prayer Team.



SAVE THE DATE

Living Streams in Christ (LSiC) presents "Light It Up with LSiC". A night to sing and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ.

Friday 17 December - 6.30pm

The evening is open to everyone.

The service will be live-streamed from 6.30pm via [GRP facebook page](#).

"Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of light"
John 12:36

SUBMIT YOUR EVENT OR STORY

The presbytery is looking for good news stories to share and to inspire us. Do you have an event that is suitable for the presbytery to be involved with?

To submit an event or story please email to the presbytery office.

admin.grp@nswact.uca.org.au