

EBENEZER UNITING CHURCH



Welcome to our Spring Newsletter.

Welcome to the Ebenezer Uniting Church Spring Newsletter. This newsletter is for those with whom we have links through our various programs, activities, baptisms, weddings or funerals... and for our Ebenezer community. It is an opportunity to let you know what is happening and share some reflections to help you think about God, life, hope and Spirituality. Therefore, we offer you these reflections with our prayers for your own spiritual journey through life. Please join us any time you are able, or would like to explore faith more deeply. Come and enjoy our Devonshire teas and the Sacred space of Ebenezer Church. At the end are some things for kids to colour.

Upcoming Events

Ebenezer Spring Fair

Saturday October 1

8am to 4pm

Gifts, plants, BBQ, Tea and Scones...

Join us for a Great Day!!



Devonshire Teas – Open Every Day between 10 am and 3 pm. Enjoy the Schoolmaster's House, the Historic Cemetery and the beautiful grounds rolling down to the Hawkesbury River. Take a spiritual pilgrimage walk or a delicious Devonshire Tea – All Welcome

Jazz Night @ Ebenezer

– Sunday November 27

We are raising funds to help our poorest neighbours in West Papua to have clean water wells. A fun afternoon/evening for all the family



Thoughts from Geoff

Almost fifteen years ago I awoke on a quiet Wednesday morning and prepared for a Minister's retreat day. I had a small part near the beginning, an introduction and prayer. I had thought about it and got up a little earlier to finalise what I would do. Why do I remember this small part in an event I cannot remember anything else about? Well the day was September 11, 2001 and an early phone call from a friend about something unrelated also alerted me to a major crisis that had occurred far across the ocean and would change the mindset of the Western World. The Twin Towers of the World Trade Centre in New York had been brought down by terrorists who took control of commercial aircraft.

The images on the TV screen changed everything that day. It was quite unbelievable! Unimaginable in its audacity and sheer terror. One of the members of the congregation where I was at the time had a friend on one of the planes. This event changed much of how we perceived the world and suddenly the terror, horror and violence we only knew from afar in unrelated parts of the world drew closer. If the mighty USA could succumb to such violence and terror, we would not have a chance. A year later there were Bali bombings and the majority killed were Australians – we claimed this as a terrorist act against Australians and launched more deeply into the world of fear.

Over the last 15 years, terror, violence and fanatical religious and other groups have threatened the peace and well-being of our world. These terrorist attacks unleashed revenge and retaliation; the 'War on Terror'. The shock waves continue to reverberate and threaten peace across the world. The chaos in Syria and other parts of the Middle East are daily headlines in news broadcasts. ISIS has risen up from the shadows of Al Qaeda and the violence perpetuated by the war in Iraq. At a casual glance it seems that religious people are the mainstays of terrorism and depending on which side you find yourself, the name of the causative religion will be different.

As I write this I am reflecting on the wonder of a beautiful and sacred space at Ebenezer Church. When I first arrived just over a year ago, I was immediately overwhelmed by the presence of the holy. I walked gently around the church, Schoolmaster's House, the cemetery and down to the Hawkesbury River. I felt the deep peace that so many speak of. I sensed the presence of God and was in awe of this place. I have experienced the hospitality and joy of those who serve in the shop and the delights of home-cooked scones, jam and cream. Sometimes just sitting at Ebenezer, staring reality, I wonder at the beauty and feel so free and alive. I can't help wondering why we are so hell-bent on killing, fighting arguing and hating one another. I can't help wondering why we succumb to the culture of

accumulation and acquisition. I can't help thinking that sitting here in the presence of God I have everything I need and more. It restores my soul and gives me a sense of perspective on life and living.

For over 200 years a community of people have gathered here in this sacred space (and probably millennia before the Anglos discovered this place!). They have known God's presence, been nurtured in faith and strengthened to live fully as God enables. For over 200 years, a community of God's people has met, worshipped, lived and loved, served and witnessed to this profound love of God for all people. They have stood in faith and proclaimed justice and hope for all people. These values imbue this sacred and wonderful place.

They have embodied the way of Jesus, the way of faith. True faith and the deepest spirituality is not violent and hate-filled. It is respectful and loving, seeking to make a better, more inclusive and peace-filled world. The way of God is to bring people together in communities where they share together and support each other. Those who have much share with those have little. Those who have power don't lord it over weaker and more vulnerable people but care for them and offer a hand up into richer life. God is about life – life for all!

I invite you to take space to nurture your own spirit and find a deeper sense of peace and wonder in the midst of a world that has so much beauty. When we find ourselves rushing and stressed it is easy to get caught up in tension and the angst of the world around. Fear and confusion can take control. Ignorance and suspicion can become the lens through which we view other people. We become trapped in the cycles of life, stress and anxiety. We find ourselves on the treadmill of acquisition and accumulation, of competing with others and fearful of being left behind. All this is tiring and de-energising; it is not the life God offers and invites us to live.

The way of Jesus as the simple way of sharing life with others, welcoming all into an inclusive community where we all discover ourselves to be loved and unique, with gifts and skills that complement those of other people, is life-giving and wonderful. We are encouraged to take some quiet space, take a breath and be still to pray, reflect or meditate (mindfulness is the latest buzz word for this). This is renewing and nurtures our spirit and enables us to live more gently and with deeper peace, love and grace.

If you would like to be part of any of our activities or would like to explore this deeper way of living that Jesus inspires, please don't hesitate to contact us. May the peace of God be with you.

Geoff Stevenson (Minister)

***For any support, questions, comments,
please visit or contact us at:***

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Thought to Ponder Howard Thurman Meditation: God Is Here

God is HERE. In the midst of life, breaking through the commonplace, glorifying the ordinary, the Great, High God is near.

One should tread the earth with a deep lying awe and reverence;

God is in this place. Do NOT wait to hear God's sprint winging, near the moments of great crisis, do not expect God riding on the crest of a wave of deep emotional excitement - do NOT look to see

God at the dramatic moment when something abnormal or spectacular is at hand. Rather find God in the simple experiences of daily living, in the normal ebb and flow of life as YOU live it.



Ebenezer Church – A place to Reflect and Worship in a Community of God’s People

When the founding families first came together on Owen Cavanaugh’s land under the mighty Gum Tree (which still stands despite several lightning strikes, across the road from the church), they worshipped God in this strange land. Most arrived by boat and each Sunday gathered to renew and strengthen faith for the week ahead. One can only imagine to awe and wonder of the site, the beauty they experienced in worshipping God in this strange and beautiful land.

For over 200 years God’s people have worshipped here. Each Sunday they gather together to sing, pray and reflect on God’s Word to them for the days and weeks ahead. Worship seeks to be relevant to life and the world in which we live. It seeks to give us hope and give us a sense of God’s peace in the midst of a sometimes troubled world.



Around the grounds of Ebenezer Church are various symbols that invite us to reflect more deeply upon the words and hope of Jesus. There is the Bread Oven in which early schoolchildren baked their bread. Jesus speaks of how God feeds our Spirit and nurtures our soul – Jesus is the Bread of Life. The river flowing freely by reminds us of the life-giving water that Jesus promises; water that restores our soul and refreshes us. The ancient Grape Vine reminds us of Jesus’ words: ‘I am the Vine’ and how we draw sustenance and life from

God. The church door recalls Jesus words: I am the door/gate into the way of God. Worship and a walk around this beautiful church can renew our being, restore our soul and leave us feeling vital and refreshed. It is a great way of engaging in spiritual practices within a community.

Please join us at 8:30 am each Sunday for worship. Come and wander the grounds, pray, reflect and draw close to God in this sacred space.



Did you know...

- ❖ The Ebenezer district was originally named **Portland Head** after the colonial secretary, William Bentwick, the Duke of Portland. Hence the name of the community downstream – Lower Portland.
- ❖ **The name of the church** comes from the Bible ... I Samuel VII, Verse 12. After a successful battle against the Philistines ... *‘Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mispah and Jeshanah, and called its name Ebenezer; for he said, “Hitherto the Lord has helped us.” ‘*

There are other Ebenezer Churches throughout the world, including a Lutheran church in South Australia.

- ❖ **Fifteen families** are acknowledged as the pioneer families who built Ebenezer Church. Eight of those families came out on the one ship – the Coromandel – in 1802 with the desire to be settled together and to later build their own church.
- ❖ Ebenezer Church is now part of the **Hawkesbury Zone Uniting Church**. Under that arrangement five churches share two ministers. Rev Geoff Stevenson is the Zone Leader and Rev. Rodel Palma is a Pastoral Minister. Regular Sunday 8.30am services are held at Ebenezer, as are wedding, baptism and funeral services.

Ebenezer Church Grounds

Should you have visited Ebenezer Church grounds over the last 5 years you would have noticed the high standard of ground maintenance, most of which was accredited to the work of Ian Godwin. Sadly Ian passed away in July this year.

Do we now need help in this way? Yes we do. If you would like to help, or know of someone who would, please contact Ted on 4579 9235.

Bet you didn't know ...

- It is impossible for most people to lick their own elbow.
- A crocodile cannot stick its tongue out.
- A shrimp's heart is in its head.
- It is physically impossible for pigs to look up into the sky.
- The "sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick" is believed to be the toughest tongue twister in the English language.
- If you sneeze too hard, you could fracture a rib.
- Wearing headphones for just an hour could increase the bacteria in your ear by 700 times.

- Over an average lifetime, while sleeping you might eat around 70 assorted insects and 10 spiders, or more.
- Some lipsticks contain fish scales.
- Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.
- Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.
- The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing (when using the proper position of the hands on the keyboard; Hunting and pecking doesn't count!).
- A shark is the only known fish that can blink with both eyes.
- "Dreamt" is the only English word that ends in the letters "mt".
- Almonds are a member of the peach family.
- Maine is the only US state that has a one-syllable name.

- There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous": tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous.
- Los Angeles' full name is "El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles de Porciuncula"
- A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.
- An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain.
- Tigers have striped skin, not just striped fur.
- In many advertisements, the time displayed on a watch is 10:10.
- The giant squid has the largest eyes in the world.
- Most people fall asleep in seven minutes.
- "Stewardesses" is the longest word that is typed with only the left hand.

