

# CONNECTIONS

St. John's Kingaroy - Peace Kumbia-Taabinga - St Paul's Murgon

St John Trinity Wondai - Calvary Yarraman

St John's School Kingaroy - Orana Aged Care



*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor,  
Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

*Isaiah 9:6*

## The real Santa Claus

It seems that almost everywhere we go at Christmas time (which seems to be getting earlier and earlier in the shops each year), we're seeing the very familiar image of 'Father Christmas' or 'Santa Claus.'

It sometimes astounds me why so many Australians (whether they're Christian or not) would spend so much time, effort, and money, on a symbol of a jolly fat man from the Northern hemisphere who loves to have young children sit on his lap, while dressed in a fluffy red and white suit, along with all the snow and sleigh bells and white Christmas wishes...during our summer!

Perhaps I'm not the only one complaining of the commercialisation of Christmas. As we walk past shops filled with Christmas trimmings and delight ourselves in driving past many twinkling Christmas lights in people's front yards, we might wonder how many will celebrate the true meaning of Christmas – not the birth of Father Christmas, but the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Apparently, a German town (Rothenburg) once claimed they're responsible for the invention of Father Christmas. They said they did it in an attempt to usurp the Americans who claim they invented him through a series of advertisements by Coca-Cola from the 1930's.

They stated: 'The German Father Christmas, or "Weihnachtsmann," was invented as a secular figure after the Reformation when Protestants spurned saint worship and sought an alternative gift-giver to the sacred Nicholas with his bishop's mitre and crook.'

So, while the Germans are claiming Father Christmas was invented as a secular figure, he was actually based on a real person – Saint Nicholas (from which you can easily get 'Santa Claus').

Gene Veith (a Lutheran speaker and Author in the USA) once wrote in 'World' magazine:

*Santa Claus had his origins in St. Nicholas, the fourth-century bishop of Myra in present-day Turkey. Known for his generosity and his love of children, Nicholas is said to have saved a poor family's daughters from slavery by tossing into their window enough gold for a rich dowry, a present that landed in some shoes or, in some accounts, stockings that were hung up to dry. Thus arose the custom of hanging up stockings for St. Nicholas to fill. And somehow he transformed into Santa Claus, who has become for many people the secular Christmas alternative to Jesus Christ.*

*But there is more to the story of Nicholas of Myra. He was also a delegate to the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, which battled the heretics who denied the deity of Christ. He was thus one of the authors of the Nicene Creed, which affirms that Jesus Christ is both true God and true man. And unlike his later manifestation, Nicholas was particularly zealous in standing up for Christ.*

*During the Council of Nicea, jolly old St. Nicholas got so fed up with Arius, who taught that Jesus was just a man, that he walked up and slapped him! That unbishoplike behavior got him in trouble. The council almost stripped him of his office, but Nicholas said he was sorry, so he was forgiven.*

*The point is, the original Santa Claus was someone who flew off the handle when he heard someone minimizing Christ.*

Source: [http://www.worldmag.com/2005/12/slappy\\_holiday](http://www.worldmag.com/2005/12/slappy_holiday)

We can only wonder how the real Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas) would react to today's commercialisation of Christmas and how they depict him more than the Christ he confessed!

Knowing the real story of where Santa Claus (or Father Christmas) came from, imagine the following happening in our Christmas celebrations: Instead of people playing Father Christmas to their children, they instead played Saint Nicholas by confessing and pointing to Jesus Christ as our God in human flesh and as our Saviour from sin.

Imagine parents, instead of getting a buzz from seeing children sit on the laps of fattened Santa's in shopping centres, that they instead got a buzz from seeing their children sit in church to confess the true faith in our Triune God.

Imagine people giving, not to spoilt children who get almost everything they want, but giving instead to the poor, lonely, and suffering.

Imagine then, more saints like Nicholas defending our faith in Christ (without the face-slapping) and being generous to those in need. In an age where Christmas has become so much about greed and selfishness and commercialisation, maybe that would be a Christmas we could celebrate and be glad about!

However you celebrate Christmas this year (with or without any Father Christmas decorations), may God bless you as you celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ with your family and friends. May you rejoice in God's holy and precious gifts to us, including forgiveness, life, and salvation. May you enter into a New Year confident of the faith we confess together in the Creeds which were crafted by people like the original 'Santa Claus,' St Nicholas.

Peace be with you.

**Pastor Stuart**

## **ST JOHN TRINITY WONDAI**

The season of Advent is upon us once again. Can it really be 12 months ago we celebrated the birth of our Lord and Saviour? The Wondai congregation wishes to pass on to our fellow parish members, greetings for a happy and blessed Christmas.

Recently, with heavy hearts we farewelled a most loved member Rowly with a memorial service at Virgo's chapel in Kingaroy. Rowly was a lay reader and a past chairman of our congregation. Cynthia has moved to Brisbane and, at present is living with her daughter and son-in-law. In January, she is moving into a unit at Trinder Park, Woodridge. Cynthia has been our secretary as well as church service planner for many years and she will be hard to replace. We farewelled the Bendalls at a morning tea following a church service in early November.

In October Pastor Jordan conducted the funeral service of our long time member Colin Marquardt who moved to Orana some years back. Col held many positions in our church and was a very dedicated member. Our love and sympathy go out to his extended family.

Now we welcome a new lay reader Felicity and we thank her and Rachel for their time and efforts in conducting our church services. Also thanks to Del, Glen and Mark for the music we enjoy when they are able to attend. It is very much appreciated.

Thanks also to church and hall cleaners, the Mullers for keeping the grounds looking great (almost a weekly task of late), chairman Ken, past secretary Cynthia and treasurer Glenn for their dedication. We must also thank Eileen for leading worship at Forest View for many years. She has now retired and we are very grateful for her service.

May God bestow many blessings on you all during this festive season.



*Judy Guse*

## PEACE KUMBIA/TAABINGA

Peace congregation have undertaken a shared mission with Bruce and Daphne Cleaves while they volunteer through LCA International Mission in God's mission to Malaysians.

The ministry which Daphne and Bruce are preparing to support, Handprints, is a non-profit community project initiative fully supported by the Basel Christian Church of Malaysia, Kota Kinabalu (English). Their aim is to educate, enable, and empower the special needs community in Kota Kinabalu as they reach out across all races and religions. They serve children, teens, and young adults with special needs, providing meaningful opportunities to grow, interact, and thrive in an inclusive environment. The Handprints Toy Library and Resource Center caters for ages 1–12 years. It provides a toy library offering over 1,000 toys across categories (from sensory stimulation and gross motor skills to imaginative play and more). It also houses a collection of books and educational resources for children, parents, and educators. Every two months, they host playdays, which are inclusive play sessions where children with special needs and neurotypical children come together to foster acceptance, empathy, and meaningful interactions.

Project I'm Able is for ages 13–17 years. It is a hands-on baking project designed to build confidence, independence, and practical life skills to prepare these adolescents for the next phase in their life.

The Handprints Café is a cozy, welcoming café serving homely, hearty, and healthy meals prepared and served by young adults with special needs, aged 18–22 years, guided by a team of passionate volunteers. This provides a safe and supportive space where the young adults learn vital employment and social skills.

Bruce and Daphne's commissioning service on Sunday January 4th, will affirm both Bruce and Daphne, and the congregation, in their shared calling.

Over the past months, our congregation has upgraded their audio-visual system in the church building. A new TV has replaced the old overhead projector screen, and a new sound system has been installed. The renovation has been well received with even the older members able to read the liturgy and words to their beloved hymns and songs.

Members of the congregation have been enjoying the regular bible study with Pastor Stuart. Our knowledge of biblical principles in resolving disputes and conflicts in our lives has increased, and the discussion has improved our personal relationships. We look forward to concluding the series in the new year.

Our Children's Christmas Worship Service was held on Sunday, December 14th. Our younger members were included in various parts of the service.

*Janice Truss*

## CALVARY YARRAMAN

Another year has flown by and it's almost Christmas. We look forward in anticipation this Advent Season, when we meditate on the events leading up to the birth of Christ. The Old Testament prophets told of his coming and waited in hope for the Christ Child's birth.

The shepherds were filled with joy when they heard the angels in the sky announce his birth, saying "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you will find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger". And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." Luke 2:10-14 (KJV).

As the prophets looked forward to his first coming, we can look forward to his second coming, when Jesus comes back to earth to take the believers home to heaven.

On October 19th, we held another spring celebration beginning with a church service with Pastor Stuart, followed by a delicious salad lunch and sweets. An auction of goods to raise money for the church was enjoyed by all, including some members from Kingaroy.

The Stegers have had a few special occasions in the family. Eddie and Val's 60th wedding anniversary was on November 20th. Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone. Young Brian turned 21 and Eddie turned 87, grandfather and grandson, both on November 23rd.

A happy and blessed Christmas to all. Drive safely and enjoy time with family and friends.

Join us in church on December 24th at 6.00 pm, for our Christmas service with Jordan Bennett.

*Audrey Frohloff*

## ORANA NEWS

There's always something exciting happening at Orana, and sometimes, that excitement goes on the road! We've had a lot of excursions lately to Centacare to participate in their community gardening program, as well as having student from the State School and St Mary's come for grandparents' days and performances, and some visitors from the Kingaroy High School. It was wonderful for some of our residents to visit their grandkids and great-grandkids at school and engage in their world!

We also recently hosted our annual Orana Markets on November 29th and had a wonderful response and turnout despite the heat and rain! It was once again lovely to invite the community to our home and share our crafts and skills.

Now that the markets are over, we are in full swing with Christmas decoration, with the facility turning into a winter wonderland in very short time. It's not long now until the big day, and we are all very excited to spend time with family again.

Our service manager, Bruce Bryan, announced his resignation from Orana in October and left in early November. Living in Bundaberg and working in Kingaroy was putting too much strain on his family, so he made the difficult decision to resign. We thank Bruce for his leadership and friendship during his time with us and pray the best for him moving forward. The good news for Orana is that our new site manager, Kelly Roberts will be starting with us soon. We welcome Kelly and look forward to the next chapter for Orana!

Merry Christmas from us to you. God's richest blessings be on you and your families as you travel and celebrate the birth of our King.

*Jordan Bennett*



*Left: Sharing activities with students from Kingaroy State School.*



*Left: Musical entertainment enjoyed by all.*



*Right and Below: Stalls at the Orana Hilltop Markets*



## **PASTOR'S PAGE**

Pastor Stuart wishes to share the following article from Ambassadors of Reconciliation:

In every ministry, there are people who are difficult to love. They may be combative, critical, withdrawn, or simply resistant to the work of the Spirit. These individuals can test our patience, challenge our convictions, and stretch our capacity for grace. Yet, they are not outside the reach of God's redemptive purposes—or our responsibility to love them.

Jesus' command to **"love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"** (Matthew 5:44) is not a suggestion for the spiritually elite. It is a call to every believer, especially those entrusted with shepherding others. Ministry is not merely about leading the willing; it is about loving the resistant. And the gospel gives us the tools to do so—not through human effort, but through the Spirit's work of reconciliation.

This post explores how the gospel equips us to serve those who are "tough to love" through confession, forgiveness, and the powerful reminder of our identity in Christ. At the heart of this approach is the conviction that reconciliation is not only possible—it is essential and born out of mutual confession and forgiveness.

### **Understanding the 'Tough to Love'**

The phrase "tough to love" is not a label to be weaponized, but a recognition of the real challenges that arise in ministry. When we label them, it's easier to set them apart and justify treating them differently. At Ambassadors of Reconciliation, we prefer not to use labels but simply acknowledge there are sinful people doing sinful things. When we consider sinful people, then all of a sudden, we have the opportunity to (a) understand they're not so different from us and (b) apply scripture to the situation. These individuals may be antagonistic, emotionally distant, manipulative, or simply hard to engage. They may resist correction, sow division, or carry deep wounds that manifest in destructive ways, all of which are addressed in Scripture. But behind every difficult person is a story—and more importantly, a soul. Scripture reminds us that **"we do not wrestle against flesh and blood"** (Ephesians 6:12). The true battle is spiritual, and the enemy delights in using relational conflict to fracture the body of Christ.

Often, the root of difficult behaviour is spiritual forgetfulness, or blindness. As 2 Peter 1:9 says, **"For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins."**

### **The Gospel Framework in Action**

Let us now look more closely at how the gospel provides a practical framework for engaging with those who are hard to love. This framework is not a formula, but a Spirit-empowered process rooted in three essential practices: confession, forgiveness, and gospel proclamation.

#### **Confession: Owning Our Part**

The first step in reconciliation is often the hardest; acknowledging our own sin. Even when the other person is clearly in the wrong, we must ask the Spirit to search our hearts. Have we responded in pride? Have we harboured bitterness? Have we spoken harshly or withdrawn in our own resentment? I've heard it said that if one is only 2% responsible for the conflict, we should confess 100% of our 2%!

## Proclaiming Christ's Forgiveness: Restoring Identity

Finally, we must remind others of the forgiveness they have in Christ. This is especially important for those who are stuck in shame, guilt, or self-righteousness. As 2 Peter 1:9 teaches, forgetting our cleansing leads to spiritual blindness. But remembering our forgiveness restores our sight.

This is not merely a theological exercise—it is a Christian necessity. When someone is acting out of fear or pride, they need to hear again the good news: “You are forgiven. You are loved. You are not defined by your worst moment. Christ has paid your debt.”

## The Fruit of Reconciliation

When we walk this gospel path with those who are tough to love, we often see surprising fruit. Relationships that once seemed irreparable begin to heal. Teams that were fractured begin to function with unity. Individuals who were once antagonistic become advocates for peace. Moreover, the process of pursuing reconciliation changes us. It deepens our dependence on Christ, refines our character, and reminds us of our own need for grace. It teaches us to love not just the lovable, but the broken, the bitter, and the belligerent.

## The Role of Prayer in Reconciliation

Reconciliation is not merely a relational endeavour—it is a spiritual battle. Prayer is the means by which we invite God into the process, acknowledging that true heart change comes from Him alone. When dealing with someone who is tough to love, prayer softens our own heart, aligns our perspective with God's, and opens the door for divine intervention. Jesus modelled this by praying for those who persecuted Him, and we are called to do the same. Prayer also guards us against bitterness and self-righteousness, reminding us that we too are recipients of undeserved grace. In moments of tension, a whispered prayer for wisdom, patience, and compassion can redirect the course of a conversation. Persistent prayer over time can break down walls that words alone cannot. It is not a last resort—it is our first and most powerful tool in the ministry of reconciliation.

## When to Set Boundaries with the Tough to Love

While the gospel calls us to pursue reconciliation, it does not call us to endure abuse or enable destructive behaviour. There are times when setting boundaries is not only wise—it is necessary. Boundaries protect the dignity of both parties and create space for healing. Jesus Himself withdrew from hostile crowds and confronted toxic behaviour with truth. Paul instructed believers to **'warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them'** (Titus 3:10). This is not a call to abandon love, but to express it in a way that honours truth and safety. Boundaries should be set prayerfully, communicated clearly, and maintained consistently. They are not walls to keep people out forever, but gates that invite repentance and restoration. In ministry, knowing when to set boundaries requires discernment, accountability, and a deep trust in God's timing and sovereignty. However, with boundaries set, one should always be praying that God work in all hearts involved and enable movement toward reconciliation.

## Reconciliation as a Witness to the World

In a culture increasingly marked by division, outrage, and unforgiveness, the church has a unique opportunity to shine. Jesus prayed that His followers would be one, **“so that the world may believe that you have sent me”** (John 17:21). Our unity is not just for our benefit—it is a testimony to the truth of the gospel.

This witness is especially powerful when it involves those who are “tough to love.” When a church embraces the difficult, forgives the offensive, and restores the broken, it displays the heart of God. It shows that the gospel is not just a message we preach—it is a reality we live.

## The Long Road of Love

Loving those who are difficult is one of the most Christlike things we can do. Jesus loved His disciples through their betrayals, denials, and doubts. He washed the feet of Judas. He restored Peter after his failure. He wept over Jerusalem, even as it rejected Him. When we love the “tough to love,” we are not just doing good ministry—we are becoming more like Christ. We are learning to love with His love, to forgive with His forgiveness, and to serve with His humility. This is the long road of love. It is narrow, costly, and often lonely. But it is the road our Savior walked, and it is the road He calls us to follow. It is a cross we carry.

## Reconciliation and the Character of God

At its core, reconciliation is not merely a relational strategy—it is a reflection of God's character. God is a reconciler. From the moment sin entered the world, He has been pursuing restoration. The entire biblical narrative is a story of reconciliation: God seeking out the lost, covering shame, forgiving sin, and restoring fellowship. When we engage in reconciliation, we are not just doing ministry—we are participating in the very mission of God. We are aligning ourselves with His heart. We are becoming agents of His peace in a world of conflict.

## The Ministry of Reminding

Peter understood that even mature believers need reminders. Knowledge alone is not enough. We need to be stirred up by way of reminder (2 Peter 1:12-13). This is especially true in conflict. When emotions run high and wounds are fresh, people forget what they know. They forget the gospel. They forget their identity. They forget the grace they've received. In those moments, our role is not to lecture or correct, but to remind.

Scripture calls us to confess our sins to one another (James 5:16) and to walk in the light (1 John 1:7-9). Confession is not weakness; it is strength. It disarms defensiveness and opens the door to healing. When leaders model confession, they create a culture where grace can flourish.

## **Forgiveness: Releasing the Debt**

Forgiveness is the heart of the gospel. We forgive because we have been forgiven (Ephesians 4:32). But forgiveness is not easy. It requires us to release the right to hold a grudge, to let go of the debt someone owes us, and to entrust justice to God. Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21–35) reminds us of the absurdity of withholding forgiveness when we have been forgiven an infinite debt. Forgiveness does not mean ignoring sin or pretending it didn't hurt. It means choosing not to let that sin define the relationship.

## **A Culture of Reconciliation**

Imagine a church where reconciliation is not the exception but the norm. Where confession is not feared but welcomed. Where forgiveness is not withheld but freely given. Where difficult people are not avoided but pursued in love. Where the gospel is not just preached but practiced.

Creating such a culture requires intentionality. It requires leaders who model vulnerability, humility, and courage. It requires systems that support healthy conflict resolution and reconciliation. It requires teaching that grounds people in the gospel. And it requires a community that is committed to walking the long road of love together.

## **Final Encouragement: Don't Give Up**

If you are weary from loving someone who is hard to love, take heart. Your labour is not in vain. God sees your tears, hears your prayers, and honours your faithfulness. He is working, even when you cannot see it. He is softening hearts, exposing sin, and drawing people to Himself.

So, press on. Keep loving. Keep forgiving. Keep reminding. And trust that in due season, you will reap a harvest of righteousness and peace.

## **Benediction**

**May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, equip you with everything good for doing His will. May He work in you what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20–21).**

And may you, by His grace, be a faithful minister of reconciliation—even, and especially, to those who are tough to love.

Source: <https://www.aorhope.org/post/tough-to-love-the-gospel-path-to-reconciliation>

## **LEARNING WISDOM FROM THE AGED:**

### **An interview with Gladdy Sippel at Castra**

*What are some things you know now that you wish you had learnt when you were younger?*

I only went to school till I was 12. I would have loved to have stayed longer but I had 4 younger siblings under 10 to care for after my mother died. I left school to look after them. At 12, I had to learn to be a mother, with no electricity and a scarcity of water. It wasn't an easy life, but I didn't know anything different.

***What things help you to get out of bed each morning, even though you have various aches and pains and don't always feel well enough?***

I love my Lord. He's always there for me, and always gives me just what I need. He's the guiding light of my life. The Lord gets me through each day.

***Do you have any regrets?***

I regret that I was so young to have the responsibility of mothering my younger siblings, and missed out on school. But I have no other regrets. God used me for a reason.

***What advice about finding joy and meaning in life would you give to young people today?***

The most important thing to find joy and meaning in life is to know the Lord. God is there everyday for you. The Lord has always given me a reason for living, and for joy and for meaning in life.

***Can you think of something bad/negative/distressing that happened to you but ended up, perhaps much later, bringing you a blessing?***

One terrible thing happened, something that still gives me pain to think about. When I was looking after the cows for my dad he told me to put them on the milo that had recently been harvested. But they got poisoned from it, and 20 of them died. To this day I feel responsible. I'm not sure anything good came out of this, as it meant the family had to go out and find work elsewhere, it was such a hit to our family's finances.

***What are you most grateful for?***

The love of my family. I am grateful that I had a wonderful husband for 63 and a half years, and he, too, loved the Lord.



# ST JOHN'S KINGAROY

As the year soon comes to a close, we reflect on all that our loving God has done for us and in us, and we give Him our thanks and praise.

We give thanks for the ongoing work of Asia Focus. On 12th October, their representative, Judy Brauer, was able to come and speak to us about some of the areas of mission Asia Focus is involved with. She spoke also of the challenges they have overcome and blessings they received through the work of the Holy Spirit.

On October 19th, a family/youth service was held. It was such a blessing to have four young people reading favourite bible passages, sharing their insights, and praying. They also chose their favourite songs (on YouTube) to be played and sung along with.

During layreading services, we have been including prayers for the church in areas of the world where Christians are persecuted, jailed and even killed for following Jesus. Each week, we focus on a different country, and prayer points and information are provided by "Voice of the Martyrs" organisation.

On December 6th, God blessed us with beautiful weather for our Advent Evening, held on the lawn area at St John's. The guest speaker was Rod Hauser, former Wallabies football player who represented Australia for about 7 years through the 1970s. He was also a teacher in Lutheran schools for many years. His story included how he was able, with God's help, to participate in elite sport without compromising his Christian values, and to be a witness of God's love and peace to his fellow players. The evening included plenty of singing and bible readings, and a shared meal under the rotunda.

Throughout Advent, we have again been starting worship services with quiet guided prayer time along with calming music, which is presented on the screen.

The Spiritual Life team is working with Pastor Matt Thiele and Pastor Stuart, to organise a weekend in which members of the Nambour/Witta Parish will join our parish in fellowship and worship at Kingaroy. Pastor Matt will hold a teaching session on the Saturday, and he is hoping to have several other members of his parish also speak. There will be a catered fellowship meal in the evening. The proposed date for this event is February 21st and 22nd. Please save this date. There will be more information about this exciting event in future pew bulletins.

I'd like to leave you with these thoughts from Hope Bollinger.

*The greatest gift of all came that first Christmas. It wasn't wrapped in a beautiful package and set under a decorated tree. The greatest gift came wrapped in the flesh of baby Jesus and laid in the rough wood of a manger. Our perfect gift would later be rewrapped in the scars of our sin and nailed to the rugged wood of a cross on Calvary, all because of love.*

*Father, this final week of Advent, fill our hearts and minds with the significance of that truth. Thank you, Lord, for loving us enough to send Jesus. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen.*

*Del Schwenke*



*St John's recent Advent evening*

## KINGAROY LADIES FRIENDSHIP CIRCLE

On September 3rd, this year we were invited to join with fellow Lutheran women at Zion Lutheran Church, Gympie for Fellowship Day under the theme of "Make Yourself at Home", based on John 15:9. The guest speaker was Ann Wojczuk from Life House Gympie, a pregnancy and baby help and support centre.

Every October, St John's Friendship Circle invites other local churches to the annual Kingaroy Bible Society morning tea. On Wednesday, October 15th, our St John's church hall was full. A good crowd enjoyed a delicious morning tea, and were entertained by the Wooroolin Ladies Choir. They then heard from an amazing guest speaker, Christine Downman, who spoke on her work as a missionary/school teacher assisting needy causes in the Pacific islands. The aim of the morning tea has always been to promote and support the work of the Bible Society in Australia. The bring and buy stall had a fantastic selection of donated craft, jewellery, plants and produce for purchase. Proceeds from the morning totalled \$700 and this was donated to the Bible Society. Thanks to everyone involved.

Our Christmas break-up meeting took the form of a bible study followed by lunch at the Kingaroy RSL where we were joined by other members of our congregation. Thanks to Pastor Stuart for his support and for leading our very interesting bible studies during the year. We thank God for our many blessings and wish everyone a safe, happy and blessed Christmas.

*Joan Crumpton*

# ST PAUL'S MURGON

Just yesterday, I was asked, "Nola, what are your plans for Christmas?" Here on earth there is a busyness about family gatherings, gifts and food. They are all good parts of Christmas; however, for us, who are Christians, there is a far greater reason to celebrate - God's gift of his son, Jesus Christ, born a baby in Bethlehem.

The manger is a symbol of Jesus' birth. It reminds us that He was born into our world in great humility. He came to serve, not to be served. Another symbol sometimes used with the manger is the crown, symbolising that the baby Jesus is also the King of kings.

***She gave birth to her first-born son, wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger - there was no room for them to stay in the inn. Luke 2:7 (TEV)***

Sunday, November 30th, is the first Sunday of Advent (the fourth Sunday before Christmas). This is a special time, when we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the Christ Child, our Saviour.

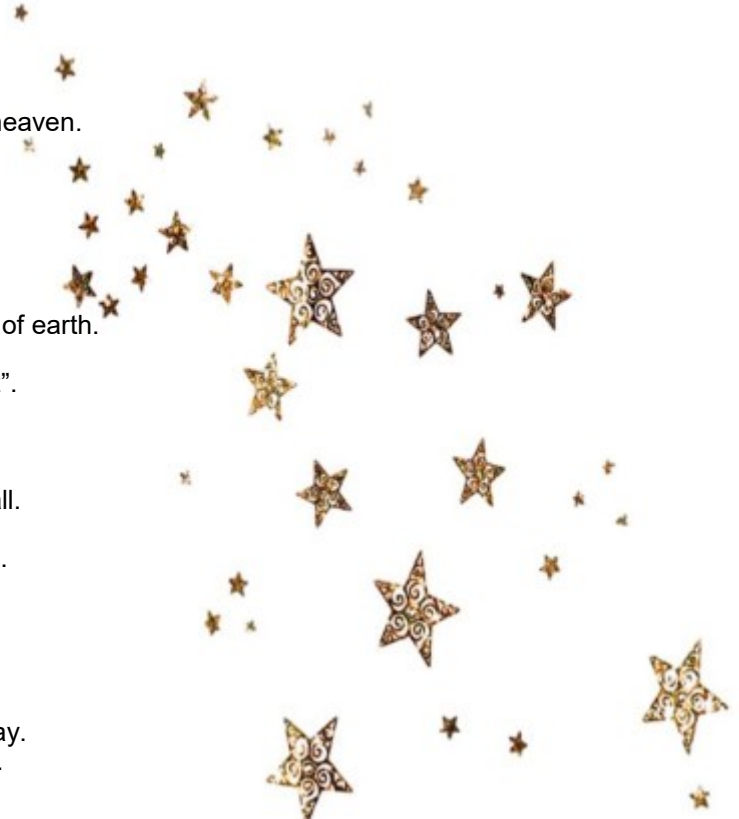
The following prayer, author unknown, is one you may wish to pray.

## **An Advent Prayer for the Lord to Come.**

This Advent, Lord, come to the manger of my heart.  
Fill me with your presence from the very start.  
As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given.  
Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from heaven.  
The first Christmas gift, it was the greatest gift ever.  
You came as a baby born in a manger.  
Wrapped like the gifts I find under my tree,  
Waiting to be opened, to reveal Your love to me.

Restore to me the wonder that came with Jesus' birth,  
When He left the riches of Heaven and wrapped Himself in rags of earth.  
Immanuel, God with us, Your presence came that night.  
And angels announced, "Into the darkness, God brings His Light".  
"Do not be afraid," they said, to shepherds in the field.  
Speak to my heart today, Lord, and help me to yield.  
Make me like those shepherd boys, obedient to Your call.  
Setting distractions and worries aside, to You I surrender them all.

Surround me with your presence, Lord, I long to hear Your voice.  
Clear my mind of countless concerns and all the holiday noise.  
Slow me down this Christmas, let me not be in a rush.  
In the midst of parties and planning, I want to feel Your hush.  
This Christmas, Jesus, come to the manger of my heart.  
Invade my soul like Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part.  
Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day.  
Keep me close to You, Lord. It's in Your wonderful Name I pray.  
Amen.



Please note: Murgon and Wondai congregations are combining for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services.

**Christmas Eve at WONDAI – 7pm.**

**Christmas Day at MURGON - 8.30am.**

*Nola Zerner*



**I WAS SO EXCITED ABOUT THE BABY JESUS  
THAT I STARTED CLUCKING LIKE A MANIAC ...  
AND THEN AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED  
BEFORE ME AND SAID UNTO ME ... "BE QUIET"**

## FROM THE PARISH CHAIR

As we once again celebrate the birth of the baby Jesus - Immanuel, God with us - we do well to consider what this birthday ushers into the world. The following is a devotion used by a Church Council member to open a meeting. Its content truly struck me as something to value and contemplate – it is my prayer that it helps you to really focus once more on “The Reason for the Season”.

*Christmas Blessings,  
Rodney Patch.*

*“But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God... For by one sacrifice He has made perfect for ever those who are being made holy.” — Hebrews 10:12, 14.*

The book of Hebrews is a letter written to early Jewish Christians who were having trouble accepting that the Gospel, the work of Jesus Christ, was the fulfillment of Judaism. They were accustomed to an elaborate system centred on rituals, the priesthood, a sacrificial system and a magnificent temple in Jerusalem. Though not mentioned in Hebrews, the early church also debated for years whether Gentile Christians should have to undergo circumcision to mark them as part of the covenant. To these Jewish believers, Christianity seemed to be a diminished faith because it removed all the identity markers to which the Jews had ascribed value.

The New Covenant does not downsize the Old Covenant but upsizes it, for the New Covenant is more far-reaching and more satisfying than the Old Covenant ever was. Under the Old Covenant, the Jews were limited to a specific land, people and liturgy of worship, but the New Covenant depends entirely on the fullness of Christ and His relationship with us. Where God once dwelt and interacted with His people from within a temple or through His prophets, He now chooses to live in every Christian by the indwelling Spirit of Christ. Jesus is greater than the prophets, angels or priests, mediating directly between us and the Father. His law is written on our hearts, not tablets of stone, and His sacrifice on the cross does not temporarily cover sin but purifies us once and for all.

Any version of the Christian life that requires Christ plus something else is erroneous because any addition to Christ is by definition a subtraction from Him. To add something to Christ is saying He is deficient in that area.

There is no longer a need for Old Covenant rituals, sacrifices or circumcision because Christ fulfilled the purpose of each of these in His life, death and resurrection.

Faith in His person and His work on the cross are all we need to be reconciled to God and to enter into relationship with Him.

The challenge is that human nature gravitates towards rituals and rules because they set parameters in which it is easy to measure success. It is not only good but essential that we attend church and study the Word of God on a regular basis, but these and other practices become problematic if they take precedence over our personal relationship with God.

The fullness of the Christian life is realized in “Jesus plus nothing,” because He Himself is completely and constantly sufficient. We must resist the ever-present danger of thinking liturgy, tradition or good actions somehow add to or complement Christ, for our hope and rest is found in enjoying a living, active relationship with Him.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, You are greater than any ritual and sufficient for all my needs. Thank You for living within me and being the resource I need to live a life pleasing to You. Amen.



# ST JOHN'S SCHOOL

## Celebrating a Year of Growth, Achievement and Community.

As we come to the close of another school year, we give thanks to God for the many blessings, achievements, and moments of community that have shaped our journey together in 2025.

### Awards Night – Congratulations to All

Recently, we celebrated our annual Awards Night, recognising students who have shown outstanding dedication, character, and achievement. We congratulate not only the award recipients but all students who have worked diligently throughout the year. Your perseverance, growth, and commitment have been truly inspiring.



### Our Newly Appointed School Captains

We also joyfully acknowledge our newly appointed Primary and Secondary School Captains for 2026. We pray that God will guide and strengthen them as they step into their roles of leadership and service within our school community.

#### Secondary Captains:

Grace Bjelke-Petersen &  
Kayleigh Johannesen

#### Primary Captains:

Lyla McDonald & Elliott Walmsley

#### Primary Vice Captains:

Hayley Elder & Jacob Stone



## Celebrating Commitment – 100% Attendance

This term marked our very first 100% Attendance Morning Tea, honouring those students who attended school every day throughout Term 3. Their dedication to learning is commendable, and we look forward to celebrating our Term 4 100% attendance recipients early in 2026.



## Our First School Musical – “Olivia”

One of the highlights of the term was our inaugural school musical, “Olivia.” This production was a testament to the creativity, courage, and collaboration of our students and staff. We extend our heartfelt thanks to every student who performed or supported backstage, and to every staff member who helped bring this special event to life.



## Carols Night Returns

We were also blessed to gather as a community for our carols night—an event we haven’t hosted in several years. The evening was filled with music, joy, and fellowship. A special thank you to Mrs Fox and Mr Lodder for their tireless work behind the scenes to make the night so memorable.

## Farewelling Members of Our Community

As the year concludes, we take a moment to acknowledge the staff, students, and families who will be leaving St John’s. We give thanks for the contributions they have made to our school community and pray God’s richest blessings over their next steps. May they carry the love, learning, and spirit of St John’s with them wherever they go.

*"The Christmas message is that there is hope for a ruined humanity – hope of pardon, hope of peace with God, hope of glory – because at the Father's will Jesus Christ became poor, and was born in a stable so that thirty years later He might hang on a cross."*

*- J. I. Packer -*



**"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." — John 3:16**