



Living Water for a Thirsty Land

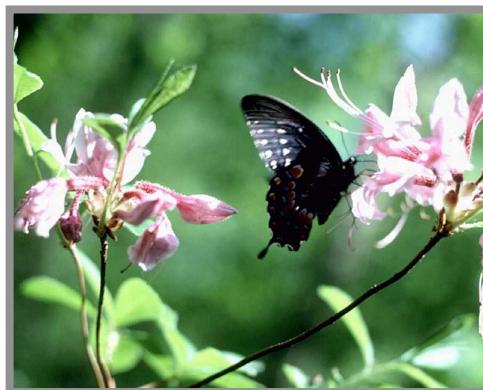
Newsletter - April 2023

Easter Greetings

Easter, more than Christmas, is the highlight of the Christian calendar. But as it happens with the story of Jesus' birth, Easter can become something wonderful that happened once long ago to someone else. Some think of Easter simply as a happy ending to what otherwise would be the tragic story of Jesus. Hey who doesn't like a happy ending! Some Christians are tempted to think of the resurrection as something that will really only factor into our lives somewhere down the road - in the future - when we die. The story of Jesus' resurrection is much, much more, and it has as much to do with this moment as any other time in history or in the future.

In the gospel of John, we get the reaction from three people's perspective Mary, Peter and the other disciple to the resurrection. Mary Magdalene is weeping by the tomb of Jesus. A man comes along whom she supposes to be the gardener. He asks her why she is weeping. She says someone has taken away the body of her Lord, and she does not know where they have laid it. Just then, the man says, "Mary!" And she recognises something about the man! Something about his voice. Something about His shape. Something about His presence! And suddenly, she knows - it is *Jesus!*

The story itself doesn't mention resurrection. In fact, we are told no details about Jesus' victory over death other than the fact that it happened! The Easter story in John focuses



not on what happened to *Jesus*, but on what happened to *Mary and the disciples!* Jesus came to her in love! And the same thing happened to the disciples. Jesus came to them, too. And a multitude of others experienced the same thing. Jesus came to them in love!

The Easter celebration is about God stepping across the divide between life and death to become present in these lives and when Jesus comes to us in this way, he offers to lead us from death to life.

There was Mary, something in her had died. She'd lost the best friend she ever had. None of us can escape the grief and pain of loss.

Just as none of us can escape doubt. The disciples are full of doubt on this morning. They hear the story about Jesus' resurrection, but the Bible tells us they think it is an idle tale - something made up by the women. I've never met a truly human person

who does not experience doubt.

Sometimes it's easy to see God when things are going well and maybe these are the times when we are less likely to look for God, but other times it's not so easy and we question and doubt if God really is here with us in our pain.

And then, there is guilt. We see it in the story of Peter. He has denied Jesus three times. We all know the feeling of guilt when we make mistakes. Peter throughout the scriptures shows only too clearly that humanity sometimes gets it really wrong, yet God in Jesus still loves and nurtures.

Grief. Doubt. Guilt - and all the difficult things that flow from them. These are the burdens around the shoulders of Mary, and the disciples, and Peter in

the pre-dawn darkness of Easter. All timeless human emotions still here today burdening each of us. Pre-dawn, pre-resurrection that is.

Jesus of Nazareth steps across the divide between death and life, and comes to Mary - and comes to Peter - and comes to the disciples - and comes to us. Jesus starts leading them from grief to new beginnings, from doubt to new believing, from guilt to forgiveness - from death to new life!

And that's the simple message of Easter - Easter is God's gift to *you* as you deal with life as it really is. Jesus steps across the boundary between life and death, and comes to *you*, right *here*, right *now*, as *you* bear the burdens of *your* life! The gift of *coming* to us! The gift of His presence *with* us as we face life as it comes! Easter is not for someone else, long ago. And it is not for some day yet to come! Easter is God's gift to *you* - *today*! Receive it - it's a free gift and spread it to the world - you cannot keep it quiet, just when our hope of defeated, Jesus comes to us anew - uplifting the people and giving us a new day and a new way to be in relationship with God and each other.

To each person participating in worship this Easter may you sit with the solemnness of the Passion story in the hope of the resurrected Christ who transforms us and brings new life to the whole of creation.

Alleluia Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed!

Yvonne



Retreat Walk Granite Belt
Camino de St Anthonpe
29th April - 1st May 2023
Guest retreat leader: Rev Heather Den Houting
For more information contact:
Rev Kaye Ronalds M: 0418 907 540
kayeronalds@gmail.com
Jenny Vichie M: 0417 192 370
jenny@vichie.com.au
Registration required by 21st April 2023
An Activity of the Uniting Church in Australia, Granite Belt, Old



 **UNITING CHURCH
IN AUSTRALIA** 

This is an opportunity to help shape the future of the Uniting Church. Every person who calls this Church home is invited to contribute their voice to this conversation.

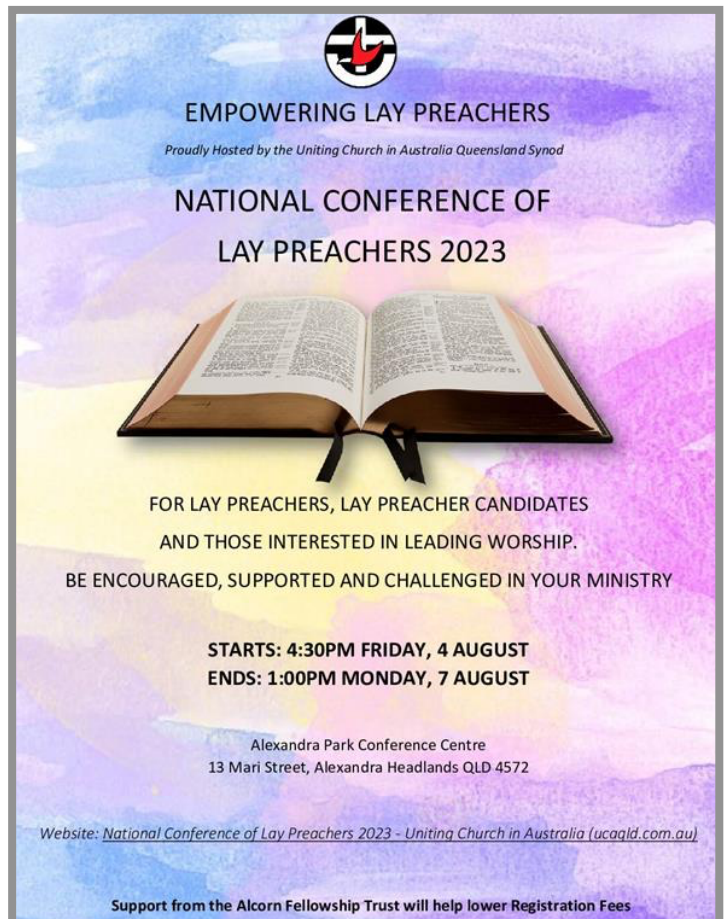
The Downs Presbytery is hosting a ZOOM conversation with the Project team on


Thursday 20th April at 6:30pm


Meeting ID: 869 2515 8262
Passcode: 865734

Please let everyone at church know and invite them to join in the conversation.

If you can't make this event you can still make a submission HERE by **30th April** and you can read what others are saying.




EMPOWERING LAY PREACHERS
Proudly Hosted by the Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod
**NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF
LAY PREACHERS 2023**



FOR LAY PREACHERS, LAY PREACHER CANDIDATES
AND THOSE INTERESTED IN LEADING WORSHIP.
BE ENCOURAGED, SUPPORTED AND CHALLENGED IN YOUR MINISTRY

STARTS: 4:30PM FRIDAY, 4 AUGUST
ENDS: 1:00PM MONDAY, 7 AUGUST

Alexandra Park Conference Centre
13 Mari Street, Alexandra Headlands QLD 4572

Website: [National Conference of Lay Preachers 2023 - Uniting Church in Australia \(ucaald.com.au\)](http://National Conference of Lay Preachers 2023 - Uniting Church in Australia (ucaald.com.au))

Support from the Alcorn Fellowship Trust will help lower Registration Fees

PRAYER POINTS

- Rev Hendrika De Nys for healing and recovery
- Highfields Community Church and the Life and Witness Consultation team.
- Middle Ridge Uniting Church and the Life and Witness Consultation team.
- Team preparing for the next Presbytery meeting 16th - 18th June at Middle Ridge
- Act2 Conversations across Australia
- The Joint Nominating Committee for Crows Nest District UC as they seek a new Ministry Agent.
- The Joint Nominating Committee for Cunnamulla, Burke and Wills Remote Area as they seek a new Bush Chaplain.
- Rev Bruce Moore, Moderator-Elect as he prepares for the 37th Synod in Session - RENEWAL

HOLIDAY TIME

Rob will be on leave from
10th - 16th April

Yvonne will be on leave from
26th April - 9th May



Potential vegetable gardening opportunities for the socially disadvantaged

Householders' Options to Protect the Environment (HOPE) Inc. is founded on the vision of a society which is **sustainable ecologically, economically and socially**. [H.O.P.E](http://www.hopeaustralia.org.au) has long supported organic and sustainable gardening.

HOPE (Householders' Options to Protect the Environment - www.hopeaustralia.org.au) is looking for opportunities to collaborate with churches who have space for a community garden.

If you are interested in following through with this idea then please contact me, Frank so that we can discuss it further.

Frank Ondrus, President - HOPE Inc., ph. 07 4639 2135

BIRDSVILLE RACES 2023 28th August - 5th September CALL FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST To join the Frontier Services Outback Links Volunteer Team

RSVP to pm@downspresbytery.org.au
by 30th May if you want to be part of this event.



If you would like something from your congregation shared with the whole Presbytery - it could be a good news story, a need, an event or a prayer point please send it [HERE](#)

DON'T FORGET TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE [PRESBYTERY WEBSITE](#) and [LIKE](#) the Presbytery UCA Presbytery of The downs Group Facebook FOR LOTS OF INFORMATION AND UPDATES

