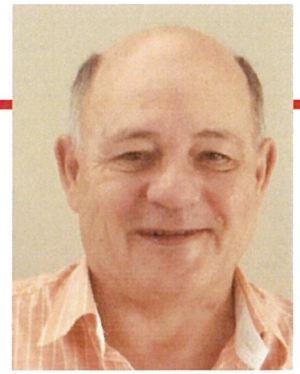


January 2024

A word from Schalk



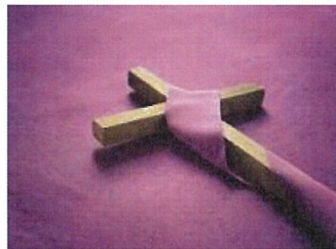
Warm Greetings,

As a young Christian I was confronted with a question which made no sense to me: ***“What did you give up for Lent?”*** I had no idea what he was talking about; in fact, I had recently become a Christian and thought I was to be on the receiving side, not the giving side.

I had much to learn.

Perhaps you would like to know more about Lent. So please allow me to share a few thoughts with you.

Lent is a 40-day Season (Ash Wed 14 Feb to 28 March 2024) in which we have a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our lives with the hope of aligning our thoughts and actions with God’s Kingdom. This means becoming less influenced by the world around and becoming more intent on loving and following Jesus.



To that end, Lent calls us to a daily pause with a question on our lips:

“God which of my thoughts and actions need to be brought in line with the way You see things?”

Please read Jesus’s guidance to us in answering this question in Matthew 6: 1 -34 . He gives us 5 disciplines,, namely,

Giving to the needy Vs 1 – 4.

Prayer Vs 5 – 15

Fasting Vs 16 – 18



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d. Treasures in Heaven Vs 19 – 24

e. Do not worry Vs 25 – 34

The Lenten disciplines prepare our hearts, thoughts and actions to centre on the events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday.

Perhaps the question, “What did you give up for Lent?” can be asked differently, ***“Will we be seeking to align our thoughts and action with God’s Kingdom as revealed to us through the death and resurrection of Jesus?”***

Looking Back

Christmas Events.

Thank you to the Christmas events team, the many volunteers, and all participants in our Christmas events.



The Christmas Lights Switch on, Carol Service, Christmas Eve service and Christmas Day were well attended. Really grateful!

It was really pleasing to observe the large numbers of children and young families at our Carol Service.

As always, the Christmas Events needs to be seen as a determined effort of our congregation to reach out to people in our community with the Good News of Jesus.

New Chair of Church Council: Dr Lloyd Walker

Jean Lendrum has been Chair of our church council for the past 7 years and has done a wonderful job. We all owe her a deep gratitude for her

leadership marked by a servant heart, willingness to try new things and her optimistic and cheerful spirit. Jean will continue to serve on the Church Council as an elder.

Many of you will have known Dr Lloyd Walker as a member of our church in 2010. Together, he and I were instrumental in establishing an outreach to Children and Families. He and his family moved to Geelong, Victoria in 2015 for work reasons and returned to the Sunshine Coast in 2022. He is a longstanding member of the Uniting Church and has served in many capacities. He is a biomechanical engineer (Ph D) by profession and has an MTh in theology. He brings wonderful skills to his new role as Chair of our Church Council. A warm welcome, Lloyd.

Looking Ahead

Small Group Sign Up: Sun 21 and 28 January 2024.

Small groups are a vital part of our congregational life and therefore we have an annual opportunity to sign up to be part of a small group for the year ahead. Booklets and sign-up forms will be available on these 2 Sundays.

Covenant Sunday 4 February 2024 at both services

We will be invited to offer the prayer below as an act of renewing our covenant with God:

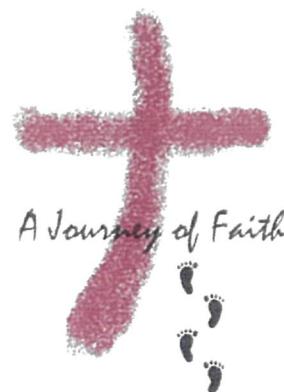
I am no longer my own, but Yours. Give me what task you will, assign me with whom You will; give me work, give me suffering; let me be busy in Your service, or set aside in Your service, made great for You or humbled for You; let me be full, let me be empty; let me have plenty; let me have nothing. I freely and wholeheartedly give all things to Your pleasure and control.

And now glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it.

***And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.***

Looking Further Ahead

I would like to invite you to a Journey of Faith leading to the Christ through Lent and Holy Week. So here are some date claimers and further detail:



Lent Times and Dates.

Tuesday 13 Feb, 6.30 pm — Shrove Tuesday

Wednesday 14 Feb, 6.30 pm — Ash Wednesday

Saturday 2 Mar, 10 am – 11 am, Congregational Morning Prayer

Saturday 23 Mar, 6 am – 6 pm. Day of Prayer and Fasting

Sunday 24 March, Palm Sunday

Holy Week Times and Dates.

Thursday 28 Mar, 6.30 pm Passover Meal.

Friday 29 Mar, 8:00 am Good Friday service.

Sunday 31 Mar, 5:30 am Sunrise Service, Bokarina Beach

Sunday 31 Mar, 8.00 am & 9.30 am Easter Sunday services.

Journey of faith through Lent and Holy Week to Christ.

On Mount Tabor, the voice from the cloud says, ***“Listen to Him”*** (Matt 17: 5).
Lent is a time to listen more deeply to the voice of Jesus.



Deliberately making time to listen to Jesus (rather than your own voice), can empower us to live lives more aligned with the Kingdom of God.

Here are 3 ways in which you could listen to Jesus this Lent and Holy Week.

- a. **Prayer.** A core concern is the 'prayer-temperature' in our church. Cold and lukewarm prayer is unacceptable to God--- what is needed is 'on-fire' prayer, which is pleasing to God as it reflects our love for Him. To encourage us, all are invited to the following:
 - i. Congregational Morning Prayer: Saturday 2 March 10:30 am – 12 noon
 - ii. Day of Prayer and fasting: Saturday 23 March 6am - 6 pm at Church, 1-hour slots. Conclude with Communion Service.
 - iii. Silent prayer/mindfulness for 30 mins every Monday during Lent at the church. (More details to follow.)
- b. **Daily Reflections.** A pamphlet of daily scripture readings and a short comment will be available on Sun 4 Feb 2024 in digital and 'hard copy' format.
- c. **Preaching Themes for Lent and Holy Week.**

My hope is that individuals and small groups might use the preaching themes and scripture readings as given in the attachment for personal devotions and small group studies. **(SEE ATTACHED)**

Lastly, Marlene and I are slowly getting our minds around a new season in our lives as my retirement date approaches. Many have asked about my 'life after

retirement'. I don't really have an answer simply because I have never retired before!

Here's one option:



However, I know the following things:

- a. Marlene will still be working till at least the end of 2024. (No doubt home chores will come my way)
- b. We are having a camping weekend with all our children and grandchildren on the first weekend of May. (No electricity—will the teenagers and Grandfather survive?)
- c. I'm a pastor at heart and will be doing some form of 'pastoring' (paid or unpaid) after a few months of being still. Not clear what this might look like as yet.
- d. We will continue, as we have always done, worship at a local church every Sunday. Not yet sure where.
- e. One prayer request for us is that God will lead us to a community where we will 'belong'. Kawana has spoilt us in this regard.

Much love to you all,

Blessings

Schalk