

CHRISTMAS 2023

# An Unexpected Experience ☆

Advent and Christmas are almost upon us. In the lead up to Christmas we might send and receive cards and gifts as well as annual Christmas letters containing warm greetings. It is lovely when we receive a card or a gift that was totally unexpected. It is nice to get some surprises which can help make Christmas very special.

This year the Ministry Team's Advent/Christmas theme is "An Unexpected Experience". What do you think was unexpected when it comes to Christmas? What surprises you in the Christmas story as it is told in the gospels of Matthew and Luke? Then we also have the gospel of John expressing the meaning of Christmas through rich words and imagery. "And the Word became flesh and lived among us."

At the heart of Christmas is the unexpected way in which God comes among God's people in the birth of a baby. Yes, it is hinted at in the Hebrew Scriptures. In this baby, this child, and later this adult, we see and experience the very nature of God. Would you go looking for God in a baby?

This baby was born in a stable and placed in a manger, in an animal feed trough. Is that where you would look for God? If not there, where would you go looking for God? Yes, we might encounter God through nature, through people and through the power of the Scriptures. But at Christmas, we encounter God in a baby born in Bethlehem.

In Bethlehem of all places. And he grew up in Nazareth. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" was the cry. And the first to hear the news, shepherds looking after their sheep in the field. The elite of society were not first to hear.

The very nature of Jesus' ministry was also unexpected. Jesus challenged the righteous, those who thought they were living the life of faith. Jesus came and ministered to those who were marginalized, the poor, the sick. Jesus had a heart for the poor. Jesus noticed and affirmed those who were ignored by the majority. And yes, we can still miss or overlook people today. Jesus welcomed the stranger, those of another faith, those from another land. Today we still struggle to respond to those who come seeking asylum. We can have difficulty accepting those who are different from us.



Glen Waverley Uniting Church

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In this Christmas season of Joy, Peace and Goodwill to all, I can't help but wonder what Jesus would want to say to us and our world about some of the big issues of our day - the extremes of wealth, war, indulgence and starvation, poverty, domestic violence, the treatment of ethnic minorities, homelessness, and government budget priorities.

Jesus calls us to have a love for God and a love for people. It is as simple and as hard as that. Jesus calls us to share love, compassion and mercy, and to work for justice and peace. The Holy Spirit being our helper and guide.

We trust you and your family will have a blessed and meaningful Christmas and a fulfilling New Year.

*Neil, Chris, Di & Joanne.*

## 2023 Christmas Installation

# ☆ Christmas ☆ Traditions from Around the World

from Sunday 17th December

All welcome!

*What are some of your own  
Christmas Traditions?*

*How do you say*

*"Merry Christmas"?*

عيد ميلاد مجيد

Srećan Božić

圣诞快乐

Vrolijk Kerstfeest

Merry Christmas

Joyeux Noël

καλά Χριστούγεννα

Mele kalikimaka

Selamat natal

メリークリスマス

메리 크리스마스

felicem natalem Christi

Meri Kirihimete

god jul

Baga ayaana qillee geesse

Wesołych Świąt

Navidadpi kusikuy

Crăciun fericit

Manuia le kirisimasi

Mutlu Noeller

щасливого Різдва

Giáng sinh vui vẻ

Nadolig Llawen

Ikrisimesi emnandi

ikini ɔdun keresimesi

Jabulela Ukhisimusi

## Christmas at

GLEN WAVERLEY UNITING CHURCH

**10 December**

4pm Multicultural Christmas  
Worship & Celebration

**12 December**

8pm Annual Remembrance Service

**17 December**

10am Nativity Worship  
(incl. "Release of Ties" Service  
& Retirement Celebration  
for Rev. Neil Peters)

**24 December - Christmas Eve**

Services @ 10am, 7pm & 11pm

**25 December - Christmas Day**

Services @ 8.30am & 10am

**31 December**

11pm New Year's Eve Service

**Services in January**

10am each Sunday

JOIN US IN PERSON OR ONLINE AT  
[WWW.GWUC.ORG.AU/LIVE](http://WWW.GWUC.ORG.AU/LIVE)

*You are invited*  
**Induction Service for  
Rev. Ian Ferguson  
Sunday 4th February 2024  
at 2.30pm  
followed by afternoon tea**  
**All are welcome**

Come along and welcome our new minister and his family. Please bring a plate of food to share for afternoon tea.

Please NO nut products & NO hot food or food that needs reheating.