

Toorak Uniting Church

Update 24 December 2017

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Sunday services 9am & 10.15am

Still Thinking – On the way to Christmas – Christopher Page



It is interesting that we humans like to celebrate seasons and events annually. We ritualize birthdays and anniversaries by remembering and them with parties, gifts and best wishes. We do the same with our religious celebrations. Even in our secular culture we have the celebrations of Christmas and Easter, and for generations Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox traditions, celebrated everyday as a different Saint's day as either a major or minor "Feast" in the Christian Faith.

Protestants were not always happy about that. We know that in the 19th Century, the "Dissenters" and other Free Church members would not celebrate Christmas or Easter loosely based on the Bible verse Romans 14:5, *"One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind."* Opposition to the observance of Christmas continued past the second half of the Nineteenth Century. An article in the December 26, 1885 edition of *The New York Daily Times* stated, *"The churches of the Presbyterians, Baptists, and Methodists were not open on December 25 except where some mission schools had a celebration. They do not accept the day as a holy one, but the Episcopalian, Catholic, and German churches were all open. Inside they were decked with evergreens."*

I was surprised to discover when I arrive in Canada that generally Presbyterian and United Churches didn't have Christmas Day services unless they fell on a Sunday. In part the legacy of that earlier tradition.

I sometimes wonder if our wholehearted acceptance of our culture's excessive consumerist emphasis on Christmas doesn't weaken a more radical understanding of the birth of Jesus. I remember a conversation with a woman some years ago who was passionate about the nativity scene being displayed in a public space. When I suggested to her that there were many Christians who objected to the symbols of our faith being exploited by the state and civic authorities, she accused me of being unchristian and taking away her enjoyment of Christmas.

But on the other hand I don't think the Church has the copyright on Jesus. I know that we have acted under that belief for generations and the fact is, that today there is no longer a "Church" that has the authority to speak on behalf of all Christians. I think that we can celebrate the birth of Jesus in both our communities and our culture. But it is important that we tell the story with integrity and not allow our society to dress this narrative with too much tinsel and turkey. While we are not the guardians of the story of Jesus' birth we are those who have the most interest in it and probably the most information about it.



Christmas at Toorak Uniting

Christmas Eve

6:00pm Family Carols in the Courtyard

8:00pm Christmas Concert: Gloria by A. Vivaldi

Christmas Day

10:15am Worship Service

Summer Sundays (31 Dec.-28 Jan.)

9:30am Family Service



Stamps again!

Don't forget TUC's Christmas stamp collection for UC Funds. I hope you are keeping all the envelopes with proper stamps on

them—for collection in February 2018. I also hope you are receiving more stamped envelopes than I am! Happy Christmas, from June.

Barbara McKinnon wishes to thank those who contributed to the delicious special morning tea following the Nine Carols and Lessons service. It was a festive and welcoming occasion, greatly enjoyed by the congregation. The assistance of Craig and Jaki Simonson and Christine Brown with cleaning up was particularly appreciated.

thank
you!

This year's **Christmas Eve** service will feature **Vivaldi's Gloria**. Prelude music will start at 7.45pm with cellist Joshua Dema performing movements from J.S. Bach's Cello Suite No.1. The Introit will be Fanfare by Petr Eben performed by trumpeter Laura Hertaeg. During the service, the TUC Choir and instrumentalists will perform the Gloria by Vivaldi, oboist Anne Gilby will perform movements from Telemann's Oboe Concerto as well as Ennio Morricone's "Gabriel's Oboe". Please be seated by 7.45pm for the Prelude music in preparation for the service.



Diary Dates

Sun	24 Dec	6.00pm	Family Carols in the Courtyard	Courtyard
Sun	24 Dec	8.00pm	Christmas Concert "Gloria" (A Vivaldi)	Church
Mon	25 Dec	10.15am	Christmas Worship Service	Church
31 Dec-28 Jan	9.30am		Sunday family worship (one service only)	Church
Sun	31 Dec	9.30am	Rev Gillian Crozier	Church
Sun	07 Jan	9.30am	Rev John Edwards	Church
Thu	18 Jan	12.00pm	wedding	Church
Sat	20 Jan	1.00pm	wedding	Church
Sat	27 Jan	3.00pm	wedding	Church

On Sunday **January 7th**, interstate and local Suzuki Organ students will play for part of the 9.30am service. Immediately following the service, they will give a short recital before morning tea. Please stay after the service if you are free, and hear these young people play.



Everyone welcomes! After Christmas Day, there will be no official welcome until February. However, hopefully we all will be welcoming to strangers in the true Christian tradition, and joyfully greet them—and each other.

Campus closures:

Manse Gallery Café, Kinross Arts Centre John Mackenzie Kindergarten, John Macrae Centre and the TUC Office are now closed for 2017.

JMC opens again on 03 Jan. 2018.

All others will open on 31 Jan. 2018.

The TUC Office will be open on Wednesdays and Fridays only from 15 Jan. to 31 Jan.

Best wishes for a happy Christmas!

In our thoughts and prayers—

The families of the following congregation members who passed away in 2017:

Robin Stewardson

David F Smith

Adli Top

Ken Clayton

Betty Lade

Russell Rechner

Ila Vanrenen

Helen Clayton

TUC Office Summer Hours:

CLOSED

25 December 2017 - 14 January 2018

OPEN

Wed. & Fri. only 15 - 31 January 2018

OPEN

Mon. to Fri. from 1 February 2018

Grief Support Group

Please note that the next Grief Support Group meeting on 26th December will not be running due to the Boxing Day public holiday. The next support group meeting will be on Tuesday **30th January 2018**.

Grief has no timeline. It can feel as if a significant part of ourselves has been inextricably wrenched away. A support group can offer companionship and form a united understanding. Mental Health Foundation Australia invites you to attend a Grief and Loss Support Group. It's non-denominational and an open-ended invitation for a monthly meeting. Everyone is welcome. Last Tue. of the month at 12:00, St. Johns Church, 86 Clendon Rd, Toorak. 9826 1422 | www.mhfa.org.au

Op Shop Report The Toorak Ecumenical Op Shop had a very successful year where we made \$252,000, of which the Uniting Church distribution was \$84,000 divided among the following recipients:

Avalon Centre	7,000
Berry Street Family Service	2,500
Black Rhino Basketball Club (helping South Sudanese assimilate)	8,000
Broadmeadows Uniting Care	6,000
Harrison Community Services Uniting Care	6,000
HALT (Hope Assistance Local Tradies)	8,000
John Macrae Centre for the Elderly	5,000
Kildonan Uniting Care	6,000
Prahran Mission Uniting Care	6,000
VICSEG-New Future-Programs for Family, Children & Young People	10,000
P.S. My Family Matters	8,000
Manningham LINC (Volunteers Working with Refugees & Elderly)	2,500
Western Tigers Football Club-South Sudanese Integration Program	5,000
TUC Minister's Discretionary Fund	4,000
Total	\$84,000

We wish to thank all our volunteers who work at the Op Shop, donors who supply marvellous items for sale, and our customers who purchase from us. The Op Shop will re-open on Monday 15 January, at 1A Carters Ave, Toorak.

With our best wishes, *Carrlo Jack, Margaret Rees-Jones and Wendy Ritchie*, Committee members, Toorak Op Shop

Welcome to Toorak Uniting Church

We welcome all people irrespective of race, religion, political views, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, or age. Wherever you are on your faith journey, wherever you have come from and wherever you are going to; whatever you believe, whatever you do not believe, you are welcome here at Toorak Uniting Church. Please come and join us after the service for fellowship and a cup of tea or coffee.