



Toorak Uniting Church

Update 09 December 2018

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Phone: 9829 0300
Sunday services 9am & 10.15am



Still Thinking — The Reason for the Season — Christopher Page

In the ancient world it was not common to celebrate a person's birthday. It was more common to celebrate the death of famous or significant people. It may seem strange to us but early Christians did not celebrate the birth of Jesus. They had the narrative of his birth, particularly from the Gospel Luke had written around 85AD, but the early church fathers Origen (d.255), St. Irenaeus (d.202), and Tertullian (d.220) do not include Christmas or its date on their lists of feasts and celebrations.

Some modern scholars, using the details given in the Bible, suggest that Jesus' birthday was likely before October or after March. So, although we don't know when Jesus was born, it seems quite unlikely that it was on December 25th. So how did December 25th become the date we celebrate? The most likely explanation is that as the Roman Empire became Christian there was a movement by the Bishops of the church to "Christianize" the pagan celebrations. So, in order to claim the winter solstice celebration of the sun god Mithras in the middle of the 4th Century after Jesus' death, the newly converted Emperor Constantine declared December 25th to be the official birthday of Jesus.

Over the centuries the celebration of Christmas has waxed and waned depending on the theologies and doctrines of the different wings of the Christian Church. In the 17th Century the emerging Free Church which included Separatists, Baptists, Congregationalists and Puritans, condemned the celebration of Christmas because its cultural pagan origins overshadowed the true biblical meaning of Jesus' birth. During this period, the English Parliament banned the celebration of Christmas entirely, replacing it with a day of fasting and considering it "a popish festival with no biblical justification", and a time of wasteful and immoral behaviour. The Army were even sent to raid homes and confiscate any cooked meat. I wonder what they would think of our Christmas Celebrations today.

There has been a move in the modern church to emphasise the true meaning of Christmas. I think the recent recovery of the celebration of Advent is a healthy corrective to some of our consumerist aspects of Christmas, while not retreating into pietism or "Scroogeism." It is interesting that one of the great social reformers of the 19th Century, Charles Dickens highlighted Christmas as both a time of festivities with a reflection on the moral and social values in his book, *A Christmas Carol*.

Advent, with its focus on our commitment to hope, love, peace and joy, woven from the stories of John the Baptizers, Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, give us a clearer sense of the "reason for the season." It is also a time of personal and collective reflection on faith and how a commitment to the one born in a stable is lived out in my life and within the world around me.

Come Celebrate Christmas with us!

December 9

10:15am Nine Lessons & Carols

Christmas Eve

6:00pm Carols in the Courtyard

8:00pm Christmas Concert
Saint-Saëns Christmas Oratorio

Christmas Day

10:15am Family worship



Summer Sundays

10:15am (30 Dec.-27 Jan.)

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This morning's service of Lessons & Carols will be followed by a special morning tea! Many thanks to all those who've contributed and to Carrlo, Barbara & Jaki for organising it.

TUC is the beneficiary of a gift from the estate of former member, **Ila Vanrenen**, "for the purposes of sustaining the high quality of music played in the Church." Ila's gift is received with deep appreciation.



Stained glass windows—self-guided tour. Borrow a booklet from the western porch entrance.

In our thoughts and prayers:

The family of Barrie Lade whose funeral was held at TUC on Friday. Barrie was a much loved member and CC leader of this church.

Patricia Begg and Chris.

Andrew Blackburn and Jean.

Ray Northrop.

Emily Karakatsanis (18) undergoing treatment here & trial drug therapies in the USA for an extremely rare illness. Please pray for her healing. Emily's mother will be married at TUC shortly.

For supporters of TUC using **Planned Giving Envelopes**, your 2019 envelopes are now available at the rear of the Church. For more info. on how to support TUC & its programmes, please contact Stan: 9813 5242 | 0427 401 299 | stanlaugher@acslink.net.au







Save your Stamps!

Saving used stamps is probably the easiest outreach you can do! Just tear the stamp off the envelope, leaving plenty of paper around it, & pop it in a bag/box.

We will collect them at TUC, & take them to the Uniting Church Fellowship Fund (alias Sammy Stamp), where dedicated volunteers will sort them.

So far this year, they have made a massive \$37,000 from sales, which will be distributed, via grants, to Uniting Church projects.

Please start collecting, & bring your stamps to TUC from February 2019.

Thank you very much!













Farewell to Lucy Lewis, who heads off to Brisbane to take up a one-year position at the Princess Alexandra Hospital.

PRAYERS FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Ecumenical services, open to everyone with prayers for the visible unity of Christians. **10am, last Thu. of the month, Feb-Nov.** 30minute services followed by refreshments and a chat.

Dates for 2019:

February 28 St John's Anglican

*World Day of Prayer - Friday March 1 @ 2pm - Swedish Church. Country: Slovenia
Theme: "Come - Everything is Ready"*

March 6 Ash Wednesday

March 28 Toorak Uniting

April 19 GOOD FRIDAY WALK - starting at St John's @ 11.30am finishing at TUC. (Refreshments provided)

April 25 Anzac Day—No Service

May 30 St Peter's Church

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity -

Sun. June 2 - Pentecost June 9

Prayers at St. John's - Thu. June 6, @ noon, followed by Lunch

June 27 St John's Church

July 25 Toorak Uniting

August 29 Swedish Church

September 26 St Peter's

October 31 St John's

November 28 Toorak Uniting

Diary Dates

Tue 11 Dec 2.00pm	St Cath's Junior School Christmas Service Church
Wed 12 Dec 11.00am	St Cath's Senior School Christmas Service Church
Fri 21 Dec 4.00pm	Office & Café close for Christmas period
Mon 24 Dec 6.00pm	Christmas Eve Family Carols in the Courtyard
Mon 24 Dec 8.00pm	Concert: Saint-Saëns Christmas Oratorio Church
Tue 25 Dec 10.15am	Christmas Day Family Worship Church
Summer Sundays	30 December—27 January: 10.15am service only
Tue 08 Jan 9.30am	Office re-opens Tuesdays & Thursdays only
Mon 14 Jan (TBC)	Café re-opens
Fri 01 Feb 9.30am	Office re-opens Monday-Friday

TUC Office Summer Hours:

CLOSED 22 December 2018-6 January 2019

OPEN Tue. & Thu. Only, 7-31 January 2019

OPEN Mon. to Fri. from 1 February 2019

Kinross House Summer Hours:

Closed after Fri. 14 December 2018

Open (TBC)

Manse Café Summer Hours:

Closed after Fri. 21 December 2018

Open Mon. 14 January 2019

TUC's 10.15 **door duty team** is in need of a few more volunteers. Health issues, family & travel commitments mean our numbers are dwindling. If you can spare 2-8 Sunday mornings a year please consider this. It isn't complicated, plenty of training & support will be provided, & duty swaps are possible if needed. Please contact Jenny to find out more. 0400 800 471 | 9819 2636, or jstewardson@i.net.au

ELECTION DAY FAIR



In spite of the weather [:(] we still had a very successful Fair, raising a total of \$5,688 . A stall by stall breakdown of takings is as follows:

Cakes and preserves	\$2,275	Bric-a-brac and craft	\$ 893
2nd hand books	\$1,317	Sausage sizzle	\$1,203

Heartfelt thanks to all those who organised, set-up, worked on the day, cleaned up and contributed with donations of baked goods, books, bric-a-brac, umbrellas, gazebos and time. Well done everyone, a fantastic effort!

German Baroque Christmas Concert - TODAY at 2.30pm.

St Oswald's Anglican Church, 100 High St, Glen Iris. Tickets at the door.

TUC's Hospitality Weekend Friday 29 – Sunday 31 March 2019

Following the successful mystery pairing of hosts & guests at simple meals in private homes during Hospitality Weekends in 2016 & 2017, another opportunity to meet other members of the Congregation will be held in March 2019. This is a special time for companionship & getting to know members of the congregation. You can either host a meal (or afternoon tea) or just be a guest; or do both! In Feb. there will be invitations available for those who wish to host and those who wish to be a guest.



Don't miss out! Note the dates in your new 2019 diary & calendar now.

Missing tablecloths: 1 round, self-patterned, white and 1 small, square, plain white. Please return to the Office.

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 TUC. Please come and join us after the service for fellowship and a cup of tea or coffee. TUC has been a proud member of the Toorak Ecumenical Movement since signing the Ecumenical Agreement in 1980. We pray for our partner churches: St Peter's Roman Catholic Church, St John's Anglican Church and the Swedish Church.



COME TO THE STABLE

At East Kew Uniting Church
142 Normanby Road, Kew East

Free family Christmas fun for all ages

Friday 21st December 5-7pm

Meet the baby animals
Donkey rides
Christmas Craft
Story telling
Face painting
Sausage sizzle
Dressing up
Photos with Mary & Joseph



Finishing with carol singing in the church at 6:30pm
With all Directions Choir