

# The Westerly



PWV & PPW Newsletter No.40 – 8th December 2022



## How will we face the future? God is with us!

Rev Tupe Ioelu (Geelong Wesley UCA) & Rev. Linley Liersch (PPW MDSE)

This last Sunday before Christmas we come to the fulfilment of the prophecy we heard in the Isaiah reading – "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel", which means, 'God is with us' (v23). For Matthew's readers the details of the story of Jesus' birth were vitally important – showing them that Jesus was indeed the Emmanuel spoken of in prophecy.

It is hard to see through fresh eyes the drama of the story Matthew retells – it is a story so familiar to us. However, when we pause and put ourselves in the position of Joseph and the inner conflict that followed him into his sleep, then we can imagine how torn he must have been on discovering that Mary was pregnant at the time of their betrothal: when they would not have yet had sexual relations; the societal pressures and expectations of what he needed to do in such circumstances; and his love and care of Mary and the baby – grappling all the while with what Mary has explained to him about how the baby was conceived. In this passage from Matthew, even before Jesus is born, the story of the fulfilment of that prophecy of God with us, brings a reconciliation to Joseph's conflicted mind, between him and Mary, and I imagine, between Joseph and God.

How many times do we, when facing inner dilemmas and conflicts, need to look to Jesus and grasp His promises and trust Him. When Place for Hope accompanies or trains those leading or journeying through change, we explore the inner transition process that all of us undergo to help emotionally and mentally re-orientate ourselves to external changes. In the middle of the transition process, between letting go of what was and entering the new beginning, we often struggle with the uncomfortable feeling of the 'in-between' – it is in that place that we most need to trust that God is with us and that we are held in God's hands.

In times of conflict and division, we experience many emotions, and these will often surface in the telling of our stories. They can include fear, confusion, anxiety, doubt, anger, disappointment, helplessness, frustration, sadness, despair, being overwhelmed, lonely or impatient. Bringing God's larger, more loving story into these stories and emotions allows us to better understand our own stories, and those of others .... it cuts across the pain, divisions and suspicions that may have occurred and whilst acknowledging them as valid and meaningful (God is with us, sharing our emotions), helps us to look up, outward and beyond our individual stories to something much bigger and better. We are beloved children of God and so is everyone and everything else – and God is with us all. *Carolyn Merry (The Faith Nurture Forum) 18 December, 4th Sunday of Advent | The Church of Scotland*

If it is true that in the next 10 years our church is about to undergo the biggest change we have ever had to face as a church? How import is it for us to understand that God is with us! As Christians we are called not to allow fear, confusion, anxiety, doubt, anger, helplessness, frustration, sadness, despair, being overwhelmed, lonely or impatience make the decision about the future. Instead we are called beyond these to stand in faith. To stand in the certainty that God's Kingdom reigns. **How will we as a church chose to face the future?**

As we prepare for Christmas, we hear the story of Joseph's surprising preparation and change of heart. Joseph plays an important role in this birth story, providing support, protection, and naming the child yet to be "God with us."

**When in our lives have, we felt conflicted like Joseph? When have we had a softening of our hearts? How does God work in us and through us to shift our perspectives and open our hearts? What might this Advent season be birthing in us?**

LOVE

# WISHING YOU A JOYOUS AND SUSTAINABLE CHRISTMAS

## Chris Morris & The PPW Climate Action Task group

My favourite family Christmas was 2021 when we four siblings, three partners and four children met at my brother's house. We all brought a plate of food – had a simple, but yummy BBQ with loads of fresh salad, and a family tradition dessert – a NZ great aunt's recipe. Drinks were mostly soda stream water and homemade cordials (we cheated a bit with Devondale sparkling apple juice).

The little girls provided Christmas crackers, made with 'Who gives a Crap' toilet paper packaging, homemade paper hats, Christmas jokes the youngest had found on the internet; and a chocolate. They had decorated the house with their own homemade stars and other decorations made from scrap paper. They looked fabulous and were all biodegradable!

After much hilarity at the appalling Christmas jokes, oohing and aahing over the beauty and cleverness of the Christmas crackers and the delicious, inexpensive food - the much anticipated Kris Kringle. The rules: homemade, homegrown or regifted.

One of the little girls handed out tickets – the order we were to select our gifts. The first person selected, and opened. A homemade chocolate cake baked by the 12 year old niece. Person #2 selected a gift, opened it – a strawberry plant in a terracotta pot. Thought a minute and 'stole' the chocolate cake from #1, handing them the strawberry plant. And so it went on. Naturally the gifts the little girls had made were stolen numerous times, but my frozen lemon cubes and lemon zest from our lemon tree were pretty popular too.

I went home with the single, but wondrous strawberry plant (pictured) my brother had propagated. It cost him nothing but a few minutes of time. And it has given so much joy – look at it now:

In addition to Kris Kringle, we gave Tearfund gifts<sup>1</sup> Gifts that bring hope, peace, joy and love: <https://usesfulgifts.org/>, <https://unitingworld.org.au/>, <https://gifts.actforpeace.org.au/>

This Christmas was so much fun, and our hearts sang as we had celebrated by nurturing creation, sharing love with our family and loving our neighbours.

How do you celebrate and nurture God's wonder-full creation – including people - at Christmas? If you'd like some ideas, Presbytery of Port Phillip West Climate Action Group offers you this practical gift for reflection: [spiritual exercise](https://brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Spiritual-Exercise-caring-for-our-common-home.pdf). <https://brunswick.unitingchurch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Spiritual-Exercise-caring-for-our-common-home.pdf>

Wishing you all a Christ filled Christmas.



**From the Editor:** It does not matter what age your family is they all enjoy **Christmas cracker**. If you are making Christmas crackers for your family, instead of a written joke, add a personalised blessing prayer for them for the year ahead. My extended family were deeply moved by the thoughtfulness of this gift of prayer, especial the non-church goers.

If you missed an edition of The Westerly back editions are available at [Newsletters – Presbytery of Port Phillip West \(ucappw.org.au\)](https://ucappw.org.au). Next edition early **February**. Any submission are due by the end of January. Always happy to receive your stories, poems, book reviews, photos, and theological reflections from across both our presbyteries. Rev Linley Liersch [Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au](mailto:Linley.Liersch@ppw.victas.uca.org.au).

# Year of Matthew & Graham Kendrick (UK Pastor, Singer, Songwriter)

Rev. Linley Liersch

**Graham Kendrick** is a modern song writer that gives you a depth of theological reflections in his music. He has written over 400 songs and is celebrating 50 years of story telling. His Christmas Album is 'Dreaming of a Holy Night' with songs of wonderment at the nativity, and longing for fulfilment of what began on that holy night.

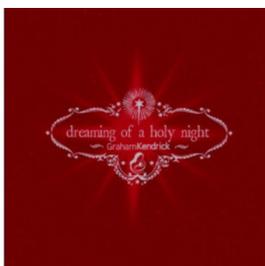
Graham Kendrick, "I have always found the accounts of the nativity to be woven through not only with mystery and wonder, but with the real struggles of ordinary people. In the midst of their dilemmas and disappointments and the drama of what unfolded around them they dreamed of a different world, as so many people do today.

"Christmas is a time when for a moment it can be a little easier to imagine a world put right, when hope is rekindled for the peace and goodwill we associate with the best of the Christmas season to become a reality for everyone. I have let my imagination be stirred afresh both from inside the story, empathising with some of the characters, and from outside - looking back in wonder at the incarnation, and forward to the fulfilment of what began on that holy night."

Some of these songs are a good match for the lectionary Year A. Here are some ideas for reflective music and videos. Or for those musicians looking for an unusual carol for Christmas Eve the [grahamkendrick.co.uk](http://grahamkendrick.co.uk) website provides free sheet music.

**A Prince is Born**, does tell the story of the shepherds but carries the Matthean themes of the kingship of Christ, for whom there are no stately robes or gilded bed and it is Mary who crowns him with her kiss. The song builds until, with a clever key change, you find yourself unexpectedly singing 'Joy to the world the Lord has come. Let earth receive her King.'

**A New world has come (Maker to Manger)** tells the story of John 1 the cosmic Christ—the spinner of planets and pourer of oceans. The ageless God takes his first breath, love's incarnation. 'This staggering God takes his first step towards us, on feet that will grow strong enough to carry a cross', links the nativity to the Easter story.



**A World Awakes**, explores the Matthean theme of the baby born in David's town is the king of the world. It ponders the question 'What child is this?' and answers with Christian creedal statement about heaven's pure light... God in flesh appearing.

**Rejoice, God is Now With Us**, this song explores the Matthean theme of 'Immanuel' God is with us. We rejoice that God resides with us. Present here, God so near! The father's love comes down and is incredibly enfleshed. There is another key change surprize in this song too, this time to 'O Holy Night' and then back to Kendrick's themes.

**Midnight Star (Making at Midnight)**, this song follows the journey of the wise men gazing at the starlight mysteries [Matt 2:1-12]. They see the sign of the new King in the heavens and travel to the palace made of marble and malice—where they are blind to the obvious. As seekers of truth, they testify to the fact that nature is drenched in deity.

Enjoy the music and the message.



# 2023 PILGRIM THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE TIMETABLE

## WEEKLY CLASSES SEMESTER 1

February 27 – June 2, 2023

Period	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
 <b>Morning</b> 9.30 – 12.30	<b>UCA Formation Program</b>  <b>DL1010P</b> Worship in Context <i>(S Burns)</i> <b>Face to Face</b>	<b>BA1010P/2010P/8010P</b> Introducing the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament <i>(J Havea)</i> <b>Online Synchronous</b>  <b>BN2120P/3120P/9120P</b> Working Out Salvation: Theology and Ethics in Paul <i>(S Winter)</i> <b>Face to Face/Online Synchronous</b>	<b>AP1000P/8000P</b> Philosophy for Understanding Theology <i>(J Martis)</i> <b>Face to Face/Online Synchronous</b>  <b>BN2050P/9050P</b> Luke-Acts <i>(R Whitaker)</i> <b>Online Synchronous</b>	<b>AL/BN3000P/9000P</b> Advanced Greek Reading <i>(S Chen)</i> <b>Face to Face/Online Synchronous</b>  <b>CH1020P/8020P</b> Christianity's Dangerous Memory <i>(K Handasyde)</i> <b>Face to Face/Online Synchronous</b>	<b>Research and Engagement</b>
<b>12.45-1.45 STUDENT LUNCHTIME CATCHUP</b>					
 <b>Afternoon</b> 2.00 – 5.00	<b>UCA Formation Program</b>  <b>DL1010P</b> Worship in Context <i>(S Burns)</i> <b>Face to Face</b>	<b>CH2060P/3060P/9060P</b> Radical Legacies: Faith, Activism and Social Change <i>(K Handasyde)</i> <b>Face to Face/Online Synchronous</b>	<b>PILGRIM MEETINGS</b>	<b>DM2500P/9500P</b> Practicing a Missionary Church: Forming a Community of Christian Witness <i>(J Flett)</i> <b>Online Synchronous</b>	<b>Research and Engagement</b>
 <b>Evening</b> 6.00 – 9.00				<b>AP2850P/3850P/9850P</b> God's Existence: Defensible or Delusion <i>(J Martis)</i> <b>Face to face/Online synchronous</b>	

# 2023 PILGRIM THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE TIMETABLE

## INTENSIVE UNITS SEMESTER 1 & 2

Semester 1 Intensive Units				
<b>CT2222P/8222P</b>	Uniting Church Theology and History	G Thompson	<b>Face to face/online Synchronous</b>	6-10 Feb; 3 Mar
<b>CH/DL 3101P/9101P</b>	Mary: Feminist Theological Revisions	S Burns and J Mcrandal	<b>Face to face</b>	17-18 Mar; 14-15 Apr; 12 May
<b>CT1000P/8000P</b>	Christianity's Big Ideas	G Thompson	<b>Face to face/online Synchronous</b>	6-10 Feb; 3, 24-25 Mar; 21-22 Apr; 5-6 May
<b>DP1100Z/8100Z</b>	Children and Families Ministry: Issues and Context	E Waldron Anstice	<b>Face to face/online Synchronous</b>	15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22 Feb
Semester 2 Intensive Units				
<b>BA3020P/9020P</b>	Psalms: Exegetical and Theological Study	M Melanchthon	<b>Face to face/online Synchronous</b>	24-27 Jul; 11-12 Aug
<b>BS3100P/9100P</b>	What are Biblical Values	R Whitaker	<b>Face to face</b>	17-21 Jul
<b>CT3020P/9020P</b>	Doctrine, Truth and Pluralism	G Thompson	<b>Blended</b>	4, 18 Aug; 1, 15 Sept; 20 Oct
<b>DP2030Z/3030Z/9030Z</b>	The Nurture and Spiritual Guidance of Children in Global Perspective	E Waldron Anstice	<b>Face to face/online Synchronous</b>	22 -24, 27 -29 Nov
<b>DS2005P/ 8005P</b>	Speaking of Christ/a/x	S Burns and J Mcrandal	<b>Face to face</b>	25-26 Aug; 8-9 Sept; 13 Oct