



# Werrabee Uniting Church

We acknowledge the people of the Kulin alliance, the original custodians of the land which was never ceded and on which our buildings for worship stand and we gather.

24 November 2024

## Whose side is God on?

*Read Acts 17:16–34.* To understand the full relevance of Paul's speech for us today, we need to understand something that's not immediately apparent about the idolatry of the ancient world. All of those altars to the known gods and goddesses of Athens and Rome. Jupiter, Zeus, Apollo, Mars, and all the rest. They weren't just expressions of their religious zeal. The genius of the Roman Empire, and most ancient empires, was the integration of the politics of Empire with the worship of the gods.

Those gods and goddesses were the guarantors of the power and success of the empire. And gradually Roman emperors threw off all pretense and took divine status for themselves. It became one grand religious and political complex to serve the expansion of Imperial power. And to neglect it wasn't just considered irreligious, but treasonous.

One of the main reasons the early Christians were persecuted was because they were unpatriotic. Because they refused to visit those temples and sacrifice to those deities that propped up the whole imperial religious and political system. Without the imperial cult, the emperor had no clothes.

This tight idolatrous bond of the religious and political was all over the ancient world. And it's still around today all over the world. From the Hindu nationalists in India, to the Islamic and Jewish nationalists in the Middle East, to the Christian Nationalists in the USA. It's about the state co-opting religion to prop up its power. That's how this particular version of idolatry always works.

The church of Jesus Christ has often been tempted to reach for power by cooperating with this idolatry and lending its stamp of approval to the state.

We've heard it all before. The divine right of kings. God and country in the Fuhrer's 1000 year Reich. And today, there's the message that God is leading America back to its former glory as a "Christian nation."

That was exactly the idolatry that many early Christians died in resisting.

Ultimately, it's the old temptation the Devil threw at Jesus. Bow down to me and I will give you the nations of the world. The one thing the church must never do is to claim God to be on the side of any particular country or any particular political party or any particular individual. That is the road to idolatry. That is a bargain with the Devil.

There is one Lord who lays claim in love to all people and all nations everywhere. The risen and ascended Lord Jesus Christ.

## TODAY AND NEXT WEEK

### Worship services

24 November: Rev. Linley Liersch

1 December: Rev. Bruce Watson

**For Pastoral Care:** Please contact Raymond Surujpal, convenor of the pastoral care team on mobile: 0432 619 184 or Margaret Bull on mobile: 0417 500 961.

### Bible readings

**This week:** 2 Samuel 23:1–7; Psalm 93; Revelation 1:4b–8; John 18:33–37

**Next week:** (First Sunday in Advent) Jeremiah 33:14–16; Psalm 25:1–10; 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13; Luke 21:25–36

### What's on this week

**Sunday:** 12pm OSLO (Today),

**Monday:** 9.30am Playgroup

**Tuesday:** 9.30am Bible Study in Foyer

**Wednesday:** 2pm Seniors Afternoon Tea

**Thursday:** 9.30am Gardening Group; 5pm

Health & Fitness; 5pm Choral Practice (chapel)

**Saturday:** Health & Fitness 7am

### Rosters 24 November (& 1 December)

**Greetings:** Margaret Dent (Margaret Dent)

**Audiovisual:** Noel Savory (Christian Ropeti-Kilifi)

**Morning Tea:** Judy O'Keefe & Dorothy Rookes (Lauina / Pene)

**Flowers:** Rose Geilen (Lorna Hodge)

**Music:** Angela Murnane (Wendy Barnes)

**Prayers:** Ashok Sherwal (Site Tupua)

**Reader:** Node Madu (Node Madu)

### Werrabee UC on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/621987747878234/>

### Church office

Open Monday to Friday 9.30am–12noon. Phone 97411084 Email

[office@werrabeeunitingchurch.org.au](mailto:office@werrabeeunitingchurch.org.au)

### WUC Newsletter (Editor: Robert Renton)

Send information for inclusion to the Editor at [robert.renton@bigpond.com](mailto:robert.renton@bigpond.com) or 0427 812 606.

### Bank Account & Boom Gate (0459#)

BSB 083-909 A/c 516109795

### To book facilities at WUC:

Email: (Elizabeth Barnes)

[bookings@werrabeeunitingchurch.org.au](mailto:bookings@werrabeeunitingchurch.org.au)

**Samoan service** (On hold until 2025).

Paul felt God's jealous love for human hearts stirring within him as he surveyed the idolatry of Athens. And be sure about this, the gods of this world are not benign.

They devour individuals and whole societies. They degrade human life. They lure us into insipid pleasures. They set our hearts on things that will not last and will not give true joy and blessing. They herd people into rival tribes rather than bind them together in love and peace. They speak lies and despise the truth.

The church has a gospel to speak to this world filled with idols. It's the same gospel Paul proclaimed before the Areopagus. Jesus Christ is Lord.

He alone has the right to claim our hearts and lives. He alone is worthy of our heartfelt worship. He alone will lead us to live a truly good human life. He alone will tell us the truth that will set us free. He alone will finally bind all humanity together in mutual love and respect.

That was Paul's gospel, and that's our gospel.

(From a sermon preached in the USA by the Rev. Len Vander Zee on 10 November 1974. It has been edited for space reasons.)

## Congregational Meeting today

Immediately after worship today we have a congregational meeting. The main item on the Agenda is the appointment of six representatives for the Joint Nominating Committee. Our six nominees are Ken Storey, Geoff Gook, Deb Cochran, Anina Latu, Lauina Levave and Site Tupua.

### Role of a JNC.

The JNC has the responsibility to prepare a profile of the congregation for approval by the Church Council and the Presbytery, then to read profiles of potential ministers and, if appropriate, conduct a conversation with one or more ministers, and eventually to recommend to the congregation the calling of a particular minister. Much of this work is done confidentially. (Bev Lambie secretary)

## Report from the Church Council

The Church Council met on Wednesday 13 November and would like to inform the congregation of the following:

- Church Council is pleased to confirm that the Rev. Bruce Watson will lead Sunday morning worship on the 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays from November to the end of February 2025. Raymond Surujpal from the Worship committee is finding persons to lead worship on 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays.
- Funds raised from the church fete held on 26<sup>th</sup> October are \$3,556.75. Thank you to our fete convenors Amelia Ropeti-Kilifi, Tracey Seulupe and to everyone involved in the activities of the day.
- The baptisms of Kalo Fatale'o Serenity Moala as well Lucy and Florence Lopetina will take place on Sunday 12 January. Rev. Ian Pearse will lead worship on that day.

- A Christmas carols service will be held on Sunday 15 December at 7pm at the church.
- A Christmas Day service will be held on Wednesday 25 December at 9.30am at the church.
- Quotes are being obtained for the re painting of the lines and signage for the disabled car spaces in the off-street parking area at the front of the church.

(Margaret Bull. Church Council Secretary.)

## The Reverse Advent Calendar

A Reverse Advent Calendar begins as an empty box. For 20 days in the lead up to Christmas you place one item (non-perishable food, toiletries, Christmas treat) into the box. After 20 days your filled Reverse Advent Calendar is dropped off to a designated location where it is distributed by food relief agencies to people in your immediate community who are experiencing food insecurity.



Unlike a regular Advent Calendar where the focus is on receiving a treat every day the Reverse Advent Calendar takes the focus off receiving and places the focus on giving to others.

**You can participate** by collecting a box from the church office, filling it with items and returning it by December 15. Alternatively you can place an item or two in the box found in the church foyer.

Contact Lauren Duckworth (Withers) for further details  
Email: [glduckworth2@gmail.com](mailto:glduckworth2@gmail.com). Phone: 0437 008 328.

Website: [www.reverseadventcalendar.com.au](http://www.reverseadventcalendar.com.au)

Facebook: Reverse Advent Calendar Werribee

## Christmas appeal from Uniting

Our congregation has had a long history of supporting the Uniting Church's social support agency, including hosting the local agency for many years. They've now moved into central facilities in Watton Street but the opportunity to support their work is still very much ours. You can donate via the website: <https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/christmas/#donate> and make a very worthwhile contribution to caring for many who are not so fortunate.

## OSLO

**Occasional Sunday Lunches Out.** Nov 24<sup>th</sup> at 12pm we will be celebrating Christmas with a carvery lunch at the Hoppers Club, Hoppers Crossing. Everyone very welcome but please contact either Elaine 0435 998 013 or Lorna 0419 101 766 before Thursday 21st for catering numbers.

