

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

**Advent & Christmas 2022 Brunswick Uniting Church Congregation  
Worship - 9:30 am**

*This special edition of the Olive Branch focuses solely on our journey through Advent and Christmas offering links to prayers, sermons and services as well as lots of photos.*

## > Advent

Across the four Sundays in the season of Advent we paid attention to the traditional themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love. We brought with us the [prayers offered during the Reign of Christ](#) service, placing them around the Advent candle setting or Christmas Bowl. We invited congregation members to offer photos in response to these themes and shared them as we lit the candles each week. We sang the relevant verse of ['Hope is a light'](#) by Daniel Charles Damon and shared the candle lighting litany from the Christmas Bowl worship resources. We listened to the Christmas Bowl stories drawing our attention to the work of Act for Peace Partners in troubled places around the world. Ian offered a blessing for Samuel Whitty and we farewelled Jenny Hunter.

## > Advent Litany



Each Sunday we lit candles for the Advent gifts of hope, peace and joy responding to the invitation from the Christmas Bowl worship resources, 'Here we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights', and for the gift of love 'We continue the story of generations, telling a story into the circle of lights ... **Let us honour the light!**



**Advent 1:** *This first flickering is to banish darkness.*

**We light this candle for hope.**



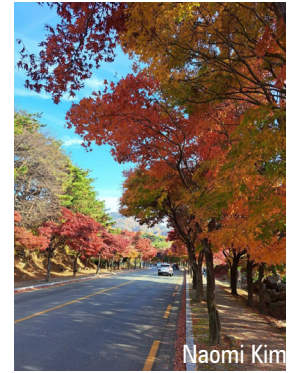
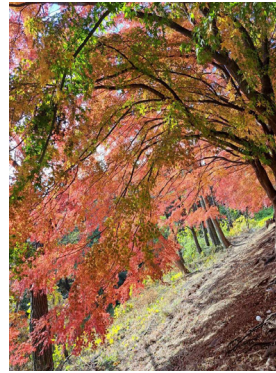
**Advent 2:** *This second flame is to bring balance and the promise of harmony.*  
**We light this candle for peace.**







Claire Foley



Naomi Kim



Claire Foley



Saide Cameron

**Advent 3:** *This third light is to bring delight and rejoicing. We light this candle for joy.*



Julie McKinnon



Maggie Somerville



Jan Ferguson



**Advent 4:** *This fourth light is for compassion and heart. We light this candle for love.*

## > Blessing



Ian offered a blessing to Samuel Whitty for his first worship service, **27th November**.

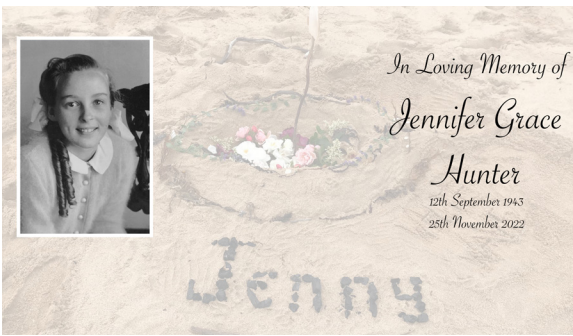
## > Advent worship packs

We offered take home packs with the Advent litany a small white candle and four tea lights, setting up an example on the first Sunday in Advent.





## > Farewelling Jenny



Jenny Hunter died peacefully on Friday 25th November surrounded by her family as they sang hymns together.

Thirteen days later we filled the worship space to celebrate Jenny's life on **Thursday 8th December**. Many people joined online. The worship space was filled with floral arrangements created by Valmai Brunlow with assistance from Helen Burnham.

In line with Jenny's wishes we sang many songs led by Natalie Sims, Ruth Sandy, Daniel Broadstock, James Balsillie, Courtney Rohde, Bronte Potter and Joel Hallinan

Ian lit the Advent candles saying

*I light our Advent Candles  
in memory of Jenny today, just as she was:  
a light of hope in the darkness of grief,  
a light of peace in the storms of life,  
a light of joy through blessed memories,  
a light of love for those Jenny leaves behind,  
and the light of Christ with whom  
Jenny now shines as a child of light.*

We remembered Jenny, listening to a brief biography offered by Ian with eulogies to fill in the colour offered by Jenny's granddaughter Brooklyn, daughter Liz and husband Colin. We enjoyed a collection of photos and a video of Jenny playing 'Somewhere over the rainbow'.

Later Ian offered a prayer written by Julie Perrin. Responding to Psalm 139 he offered words of comfort and hope. Jenny's extended family lit candles to farewell her for her final journey via Fitzgibbon Ave.

We moved into the hall to share a magnificent catered lunch, remembering Jenny's abundant hospitality.



You can access the link to the livestream at <https://www.preciousprinting.com.au/live/jennifer-hunter.htm>





## > Tower Room Window

Amelia Ware created a simple and elegant Advent installation for the Tower Room Window using a fallen tree from her garden and posters that brought together the Advent themes and characters that featured the Christmas Eve Pageant 'A Christmas Creature Adventure.



## > Advent worship

**27/11, Advent 1, Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122** Kirsty Bennett welcomed us to worship for the first Sunday of Advent saying 'Yes, Christmas is coming once more, and so it is time for us to start preparing for the birth of the Christ Child.



*Today we will focus on hope, hope in the face of brokenness, hope in the face of grief and violence.'*



Ian begin his reflection '[Hope is Optimism with a Broken Heart](#)'

inviting us to reflect on this statement. He then explained that it was a quote from the book titled 'Faith, Hope and Carnage', a record of a series of interviews between rockstar Nick Cave and journalist Sean O'Hagen. Ian spoke about the Nick's life and music and then turned our attention to apocalyptic Gospel reading and the challenges of our time. He shared Nick Cave's thoughts on doubt, spiritual yearning and grief. In the interviews Nick spoke about God being in the trauma and the transformative aspect of the place of suffering. Ian went

on to comment that there can be personal grief and collective grief noting that we have seen both through the pandemic and war. He shared a little of Kirsty's work as an architect specializing in designing environments for people with dementia and her recent participation in a collaboration with a group of Ukrainians who wanted to know 'when we rebuild our cities how can we make them



*more dementia friendly places how can we plan and prepare now to positively influence government after the war ...'. Ian concluded 'Collective grief can bring extraordinary change a kind of conversion of the spirit and with it a great opportunity. Friends do you share Nick Cave's broken-hearted optimism? His hope the hope of the God who comes in Christ into the world's grief to bring extraordinary change. Do you share that hope?'*



Read the [Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)



**4/12, Advent 2, Isaiah 11:1-10; Matthew 3:1-12** Amelia Ware welcomed us to worship for the second Sunday of Advent. She invited us to we remember the times of peace that we have experienced in our lives, in creation and in community. We celebrated Holy Communion together and explored the idea of peace in our society and in all of creation.



In his reflection '[Peace on Earth](#)' Ian asked 'What do Isaiah's 2,700 year old prophetic vision of peace in creation' and the logo for COP27, the United Nations climate change Conference held in Egypt last month have in common?' He went on to explain that there are two parts to the prophecy which point towards 'a just human society on the one hand and a harmonious natural creation on the other'. He then noted that 'COP 27 might also be said to be concerned about these



two things: just society and harmonious creation.' Ian explored the symbolism of the COP27 logo and read from Malachi chapter 4 evoking apocalyptic global warming and reminded us John the Baptist's fiery justice. Returning to Isaiah's prophecy Ian concluded *'Humanity's relationship with one another and with the rest of creation is not an ultimate given. In God's eyes impossible change is possible proclaims Isaiah. It's not here yet but the preconditions*



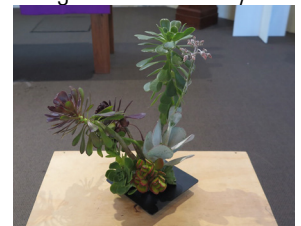
*for peace are in place. The shoot from the stump of Jesse has come. We proclaim that he has come in humility and vulnerability to show us how to live with grace, how to govern ourselves with wisdom and justice for the poor and oppressed, how to live like children in the garden of peace. Let's do that in his name. Amen.*



[Read the Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)



**11/12, Advent 3, Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:46-55** Helen Burnham welcomed us to worship for the third Sunday of Advent. She invited us to listen to the great shout of Joy for the Glory and splendour of God from Isaiah's prophecy and Mary's wonderful song of Joy and Praise, the Magnificat. Helen



invited us to open our eyes to see, our ears to hear and our hearts to understand the unfolding of the never-ending story of creation, God with us. Simone Alesich created a living sculpture to celebrate joy.



Ian began his reflection *'Leap for Joy'* referring to Mary's Magnificat and saying *'Yes it's all about Joy today and I say this knowing that not all of us are going to be feeling joyful today necessarily due to the funerals and the stresses of the silly season.'* He invited us to speak with each other about a time when he had experienced joy. Ian commented on our celebrations



of Christmas and Easter and the co-existence of pain and joy, of the traumatic and transformative nature of birth and death. He reminded us that God is constantly bringing joy in the communities of scripture using Psalm 98 as an example. He spoke of the transcendent joy he experiences when dancing and shared a story about a Street dancing group and the evident joy in their dancing. Concluding Ian said *'God enters into and emerges from our birthing and our dying with life-changing love. Weeping they linger for the night' sings the psalmist but joy comes with the morning. Not every day of course, some days we will be enveloped by the darkness of pain, loss, anxiety, grief, whatever. But even amidst the struggles of our living Isaiah and Mary proclaim that a new day is dawning in which together we shall go out with joy and be led back in peace. The mountains and the hills before us shall burst into song and the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Amen'*



Ian offered a [farewell and blessing for Dianne de Vos](#) as she prepared to return to Bangkok where she lives in the largest slum there working with [Interserve](#), an organisation that supports some of the most marginalised people of the Arab and Asian world.



[Read the Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)





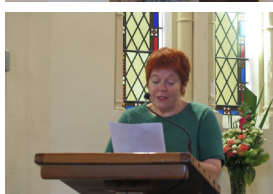
**18/12, [Advent 4](#), Isaiah 7:10-16; Matthew 1:18-25** Ian Ferguson welcomed us to worship for the fourth Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of love, the Sunday of Emmanuel. We met Emmanuel through the prophet Isaiah and again through Matthew's gospel who quotes Isaiah. We reflected together on Matthew's version of the Christmas story which focuses on Joseph, asking 'what can he teach us about love today?'



Ian's began reflection '[Cancelling Christmas](#)'



exploring possible reasons for cancelling 'Away in a Manger' using this as an example of 'cancel culture' and then to reflect on Joseph's story and the cultural expectation that he would cancel Mary. Ian asked 'So what can Joseph teach us about love?' Ian took us into the heart of the story then and how this plays out for us now in our time. He explained that *'Cancel culture is the practice of calling out and acting against behaviour seen to transgress the moral values of whoever is looking. Cancellation often includes public shaming online abuse the denunciation of a person's life and work and shunning them in professional social and virtual contexts.'* Returning again to Joseph and the expectations placed on him Ian reminded us of Joseph's decision to avoid publicly shaming Mary. Instead after his angel dream Ian said that *'Joseph discovers God comes to be with us in people and in ways that might very well seem wrong to us, might even seem to be against God's Commandments. All we can do is love as best we can.'* Ian concluded giving the last word to the Apostle Paul from Romans 13: *'Owe no one anything except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet" and any other commandment are summed up in this word, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no wrong to another; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.'*



[Read the Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)

## > Singing on the Steps

Natalie Sims gathered us to sing Christmas Carols on the steps after worship on **18th December**. As always it was lovely to gather in a big group and sing our way through the little red book for our own joy and to share the love of Christmas with anyone passing by on Sydney Rd.





## > Shortbread for Stewart Lodge

An important part of Advent for the last few years has been the baking of shortbread and the writing of cards for the residents of Stewart Lodge\*. Each year, a number of members of our congregation (& some of their friends) have offered to bake. We have made over 65



bags of shortbread, and been able to give shortbread to the Stewart Lodge staff as well and have some extra for the residents' Christmas table. The chatter as people gather to write cards in the Olive Way Space to go with the baking is our community at its best. This year we used cards with photos of Olive Arts Collective artwork. Thank you to everyone who helped. As Stella and Vivian (proprietors of Stewart Lodge) wrote *'thank you for loving and caring for our residents'*. I'm sure that they would be very happy about the ongoing connection to the Church'.

\*Stewart Lodge is Support Residential Service located in Stewart St., Brunswick.

**Kirsty Bennett**

## > Christmas Worship

### Blue Christmas

15/12, [A space for healing](#), Luke 2:1-14



While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. (Luke 2:6)

Blue Christmas offered a quiet space for people to grieve, remember loved ones who have died, look back over a difficult year, seek peace in troubled times or simply take some time away from the busyness of this particular time of the year.

During the service, we heard the Christmas story read in 4 sections, lit the

Advent candles for hope, peace, joy and love in four locations around the worship space, listened to reflections and responded to the Advent themes with simple actions. We moved back to the pews, bringing the Advent candles with us for our celebration of Holy Communion.



We took leaves to remind us of the hope we have in Jesus



We lit tapers for Iran and for all the places where peace is a dream



We floated leaves in the baptism font giving thanks for all that brings us joy, even in the darkest times



We gathered round the Communion Table to celebrate the gift of love



This service was not live-streamed. The [complete order of service is available here](#). It includes links to recordings of the musicians singing.





# Christmas Eve Pageant

**24/12, A Christmas Creature Adventure** Ian welcomed us to worship. He invited us to listen for the voices of the creatures who were part of the nativity of Jesus. Three of the human characters shared the story to set the scene and then Donkey and a host of other creatures helped Mary and Joseph to find their way to Bethlehem for birth of Jesus.



All is ready



Mary



Shepherd



Wise one



The choir conducted by Elaine Potter



The Heralds



Donkey Angel & Donkey



Mary & the Angel



Sheep and Shepherds



Donkey, the Sheep and the Shepherds



Checking in



Donkey and the Camels and the Wise Ones



Donkey and the Innkeepers Cat



All is well!



The Holy Families





## A Creatures' Christmas Adventure

written by Caitlin Mullen-Beagley

Direction and Script Revisions by:  
Blessing Mokgohloa

*Ian offered our thanks to Caitlin, Blessing and all who were involved in bringing the pageant to life and especially the children.*



The Heralds wrap it up!

Irene Chen, Blessing Mokgohloa

### Crew

Director: Blessing Mokgohloa

Assistant Directors:

Joel Hallinan  
Janet Watson Kruse

Pageant Team:

Saide Cameron, Ian Ferguson,  
Steph Gesling, Alison Nixon,  
Elaine Potter, Natalie Sims

Set Design & Stage Hand:

Irene Chen

Publicity:

Saide Cameron  
Blessing Mokgohloa

Sound Operator:

Michael Cameron

Laptop Operator: Hugh Brown

Livestream Operator:

Dave Miller

Gimbal Operator:

Ray Cameron

Photographer: Adrian Brown

Catering: Anita Brown-Major

Cindy Davenport

Catherine Drimmel

Maxine Loynd

Front of House: Emily Evans

Ruth Sandy

Minister: Ian Ferguson

Herald 1: Greta Drimmel

Herald 2: Jude Chatelier

Donkey: Harriet Loynd

Angel Donkey:

Clementine Loynd

Angels:

Irene Chen

Rowan Drimmel

Maxine Loynd

Sheep 1: Matilda Brown

Sheep 2: Lillian Sanders

Sheep: Oscar Davenport

Scarlet Davenport

Rafa Hallinan

Jacob Ly

Josh Whitty

### Cast

Shepherds: Tonia Beggs

Cindy Davenport

Camel 1: Eloise Chatelier

Camel 2: Avonlea Cameron

Camel 3: Ruby Sanders

Wise Ones: Saide Cameron

Blessing Mokgohloa

Janet Watson Kruse

Cat: Anya Kvensakul

Innkeeper: Ruth Sandy

Mary: Steph Gesling

Joseph: Matt Whitty

Baby Jesus: Samuel Whitty

Mary: Lydia Jacka

Joseph: Matthew Cameron

Baby Jesus: Alfred Cameron-Jacka

### Musicians and Choristers

Choir Director: Elaine Potter

Choir:

James Balsillie  
Daniel Broadstock  
Anoushka Chatelier  
Glenice Cook  
Sheryll Coulson  
Jean Evans  
Ian Ferguson  
Leigh Johnston  
Jessica Kvensakul  
Courtney Rodhe  
Helen Rowe  
Kate Skull

Natalie Sims

Geoff Thompson

Shelley Vanderwerff

Daniel Whelan

Shawn Whelan

Musicians:

Elaine Potter

(co-ordinator)

James Balsillie

Brad Coath

Sam Coath

Hudson Coath

Quilan Goff

Courtney Rodhe



[Read the script](#) , [Look at the Worship book](#) or [Watch again on YouTube](#)



## Christmas Eve



**24/12, [Christmas Eve](#), Luke 1:38,46-48a,52-53; Luke 2:1-14** Saide Cameron welcomed us to worship in the quiet darkness at 11:30pm. Following on from the pageant we listened to the voices of creation as they speak to us of the Christmas gifts of hope, peace, joy and love. We filled the church with candlelight as prepared to light the Christ Candle and celebrate Holy Communion.



We listened to the Bible readings with [reflections offered by Saide](#) accompanied by soundscapes



featuring the creatures named. The Advent candles were lit and we responded saying 'We give thanks for the Christmas gifts of hope, peace, joy, love' in turn.

- Hope** - May we hear the angels of the grasslands speaking to us
- Peace** - May we hear the angels of the rainforest speaking to us
- Joy** - May we hear the angels of the shores and oceans speaking to us
- Love** - May we hear the angels of the skies speaking to us

Ian lit the Christ Candle at midnight. Kirsty offered prayers for the health of the earth praying that we might be agents of change with Jesus.



[Read the Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)

## Christmas Day



**25/12, [Christmas Day](#), Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-20** Kirsty Bennett welcomed us to worship. As we celebrated the Christ child's birth, we reflected on the place where he was born, and the stories we tell. Ian lit the Advent candles with the children for the characters in the Christmas story and, remembering the pageant,



their animal companions concluding with the Christ Candle for the baby Jesus who comes to make our creation new.



Ian's began his reflection '[Christmas has changed](#)' telling us that the Bible has changed in line with the changed sensibilities of our time. He focussed in on this significant change 'Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands

*of cloth and laid him in a Manger because there was no place in the guest room'. He went on to explore the loss of the phrase 'in the Inn' and alerted us to other changes still to come. He asked us 'What are the things that make Christmas for you?' He then went on to give us a detailed description of what the situation would have historically been like for Mary when she was giving birth to Jesus. Ian concluded 'The updating of one word does not change the compelling gospel impetus of this newborn child towards marginalized and excluded people ... see him now laid in his manger with family gathered around, the family of all creation .... Creatures of the Creator's love and outside above the house this family home above it the brother-sun is setting, sister moon is rising and sibling stars are shining bright. Creation finds harmonious wholeness around this humble Manger. Let's live that story together today.'*



[Read the Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)





1/1, [Christmas 1](#), Psalm 148; Matthew 2:13-23 Saide Cameron welcomed us to worship We concluded the season of Christmas with an uncomfortable story from Matthew’s gospel, a story which reminds us that we can’t have the joy without paying attention to vulnerability and suffering, that Jesus placed himself alongside injustice from the beginning. We welcomed Carlynn Nunn as our preacher and to preside over Holy Communion.



Saide and Carlynn lit the Advent candles for the last time this season along with the Christ Candle.



Carlynn began her reflection [‘Discovering Joy \(again\)’](#) hoping that we had discovered *‘joy again as we’ve walked through the story of Jesus birth’*. She affirmed that *‘Jesus is born and with this there is hope and the remaking of everything.’* Carlynn suggested that singing Joy to the World to begin the service prompts *‘some thoughtful musings on the attitudes that we can take into the new year’*. She turned our attention

to the Gospel reading reminding us that our Christmas glee *‘hasn’t been allowed to continue long unabated’* and reminded us that Jesus was forced to flee the killing rage of Herod, that suffering has continued throughout history, that grief doesn’t take a vacation.



She shared the work of Annie Dillard in her book *‘Pilgrim at Tinker Creek’* and her observations of the cruelty of the natural world. Carlynn concluded *‘Anyway we don’t get to only sing the hallelujahs and stop our ears to everything else, that’s not the point. The trees and the oceans and the birds sing their hallelujahs regardless of the pain that is pooling on the face of the earth, because that’s what they must. The beauty is here. It’s all around us. And mixed up in it along with all of us and our patients and our triumphs is the darkness. And so my friends is Jesus God with us. To know the child in the manger is to know the man on the cross. And to know the joy of a Kingdom remade even as we mourn with those who mourn. It is to sing our praises along*



Let us give thanks to God who is Wisdom and Love: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*with all the creatures of the Earth in deed, in action, unwavering attention and in thanksgiving for God, dwelling in the minutiae and the mess with us.*

[Read the Order of Service](#) or [Watch again on Youtube](#)

## > Concluding Christmas

Throughout the seasons of Advent and Christmas we paid attention to the traditional Advent themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love and receiving them as gifts for the Season of Christmas. We provided space for loss, grieving and remembering at the Blue Christmas service and listened for the voices of the creatures who are companions to our celebration of the nativity of Jesus during the pageant and to the creatures of all creation in our Christmas Eve service. On Christmas Day we celebrated the harmonious wholeness that creation finds around the humble manger. Concluding the Christmas season we were reminded that God dwells with us in minutiae and the mess of living, in the joy and in the mourning.

Thank you to everyone who contributed across the five weeks of these two seasons, to the liturgists and musicians who shaped our services each week, to the children who learnt their lines and told the story with conviction, to Blessing and the whole pageant team, to Elaine who conducted the pageant choir and to all who sang, lifting our hearts with joy, to Ian who drew our attention to what God might be saying to us about hope, peace, joy and love, about the birth of Jesus, to Carlynn who drew our attention to the attitudes we might bring to the new year and to everyone who worked behind the scenes to support the work of worship during this busy time.



Saide Cameron, Editor



# > Act for Peace - Christmas Bowl Appeal



## The Christmas Bowl

Our congregation has been a long time supporter of the [Christmas Bowl appeal](#) a much-loved tradition through which 1,800 churches from 18 denominations come together in a powerful demonstration of faith and love to help some of the world's most vulnerable people. Act for Peace provides support through local partners.

- support for Syrian refugees from the [Near East Council of Churches - Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees \(DSPR\)](#),
- families in poverty in Zimbabwe supported by [Christian Care through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program \(ANCP\)](#)
- Sri Lankan refugees living in exile in India supported by the [Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation \(OfERR\)](#) and [ANCP](#)
- support for refugees impacted by the growing global food crisis supported by bringing together committed [Australian Christians with dedicated partners around the world](#)
- words of thanks were offered to conclude the [2022 Act for Peace Christmas Bowl appeal](#)

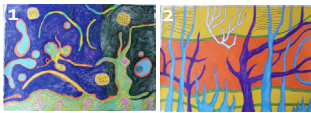
The Christmas Bowl stories were offered each week in the Olive Press and during worship:

- support for Ukrainian refugees through [Hungarian Interchurch Aid \(HIA\)](#)

## Olive Arts Gift Cards

*Olive Arts is an art group that operates alongside Olive Way on Wednesdays.*

*Supported by the BUC congregation, it provides a supportive environment and resources for local artists to explore their artistic gifts.*



Paul Henry



Chrissy



Soo Lai Yin (Ann)



Lesbia Centeno



## FUNdraising

Our FUNdraising stalls were back again with tables loaded with delicious baked treats from Natalie Papworth, Leanne Salau and Glenice, gift cards featuring the work of artists from the Olive Arts Collective, Soo Lai Yin (Ann)'s artwork, Bev Evan's Gingerbread houses and Saide Cameron's preserves, cakes & puddings.

It is not possible to provide a break down of the sales or any indication of how many cards were sold however I can report that at least **\$2,469.00** was paid into our FUNdraising account ready to be transferred to Act for Peace - thank you to Natalie, Leanne, Glenice, Ann and Bev to everyone made purchases.



## Donations

In addition to FUNdraising there have been three ways to make donations to support the work of Act for Peace and Christmas Bowl partners:

- open plate after worship - cash and envelopes
- donation through the BUC account: Uniting Church Brunswick, ANZ Bank Brunswick, 013-236 8687863
- online to the [Act for Peace BUC page](#)  
The total donated by our congregation as of 9/1/22 is **\$1,393**.

Thank you all for your generous support for the work of the Act for Peace and Christmas Bowl partners. Final figures will be provided in the February Olive Branch.

