

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

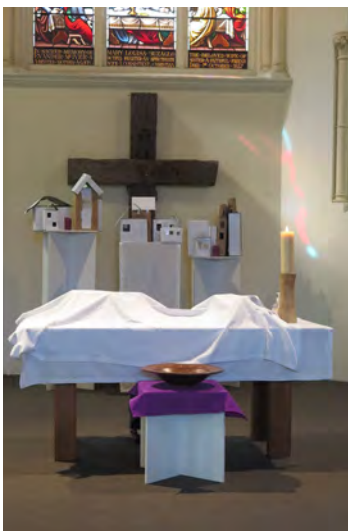
**Advent & Christmas 2023 Brunswick Uniting Church Congregation  
Worship - 9:30 am**

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

## > Advent

During Advent we created a village, lighting the Advent candles within it for the traditional themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love and partnered them with the additional themes of Darkness, Justice, Protest and Waiting. We sang 'Advent begins' by David Bjorlin, this song provided the inspiration for the additional themes. We also sang Maranatha and Dare to Dream a number of times through the season. We listened to the Christmas Bowl stories, drawing our attention to the work of Act for Peace Partners in troubled places around the world.

## > The Village



Planning for Advent began early in November. We met to reflect on the lectionary readings, local and global issues, the Christmas Bowl stories and the pageant. We very quickly decided to connect with the pageant 'It's a village' recognizing that we are all part of a local and global village. We then turned our attention to what we could offer as a visual installation and the idea of a cardboard village emerged.

We are grateful to Amelia Ware for developing a design concept and to everyone who helped to create the village using random pieces of cardboard and paper, chunks of polystyrene and lots of sticky tape and glue. The village grew week by week. The Blue Christmas prayers were



added as a path. On Advent 4 we added people (photos and names), olive branches, an ice-cream shop and a Ferris wheel. We also added paper candles as a prayer offering which were later spread around the walls of the apse.



## > Advent Litany

As we lit the Advent Candles each week Cath James invited us to respond in prayer. The prayers were adapted to our themes by Saide Cameron using the Act for Peace Christmas Bowl worship resources.



As we light our first Advent Candle,  
**we open ourselves up to Your Hope in our lives.**

We light the Advent Candle and remind ourselves  
**of the darkness of fear, despair and violence that we see and encounter in the world.**

We hold on to the hope that we have in you  
**as we enter this time of waiting and preparing.**



As we light our second Advent Candle,  
**we open ourselves up to Your Peace in our lives.**

We light the Advent Candle and remind ourselves  
**of the power of prayer to transform the world, a world where many suffer at the hands of others.**

We commit ourselves to work and strive for justice  
**and to speak of peace in this Advent Season.**



As we light our third Advent Candle,  
**we celebrate the Joy of having You in our lives.**

We light the Advent Candle and remind ourselves  
**that joy can be found in ordinary and extraordinary ways in prayer and in protest, in working together.**

We open ourselves up to the possibility of joy  
**and seek to share this joy with others in your name.**



As we light our fourth Advent Candle,  
**we celebrate Your Love.**

We light the Advent Candle and remind ourselves  
**that You are the source of beauty and love holding this troubled world in your fathomless care.**

We wait now, we wait to celebrate your birth,  
**to celebrate love that fills the hungry with good things.**

## > Singing on the Steps

Natalie Sims and Jessica Kvensakul gathered us to sing Christmas Carols on the steps after worship on **17th & 24th December**, respectively. 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.



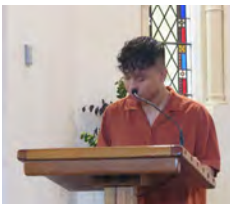
## > Advent worship



**3/12, [Advent 1](#), 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37** Natalie Sims welcomed us to worship. This was the first Sunday of Advent, and the start of the Church year – the word Advent means “coming” or “arrival” and this is the time when we anticipate the coming of Jesus at his birth, and our expectation of Christ’s return. We considered the first of our Advent readings – about being ready and having hope, including in times of the deepest darkness.



We welcomed John Evans (retired minister and member of our congregation) as our preacher. In his reflection '[Marantha: Come Lord Jesus, come](#)' John reminded us that '*Advent is the season of the Christian year when in which we dream and hope for a better world.*' and that '*There is an edge to Advent – and put bluntly, a challenging edge.*' John helped us to reflect on the challenges of the season and offered the observation that '*life, our life together, is like some extended road trip, a pilgrimage, if you like a Christmas road trip. ...*'



going on to explore this further together with insights from Jesus and the Apostle Paul. He concluded '*Advent is an important time. It can rattle our cages. But it is fundamentally a time of hope. A time is coming, God will be all in all. Remember now, as Desmond Tutu once said: goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death. And why? As we will soon celebrate: Christ who loves us has come. . . and also continues to love us. Marantha: Come Lord Jesus, come.*'



Jan Sebastian presided over Holy Communion.



**10/12, [Advent 2](#), Mark 1:1-8; Psalm 85:1-2,8-13** Amelia Ware welcomed us to worship. We celebrated the second week of Advent by lighting the second candle for peace. Our service focussed on preparing the way for peace and justice, and the freshness and growth that can come from our faithfulness.



In her reflection '[Peace is an imperative, not an option](#)' Jan invited us to reflect on the path of life with all its twists and turns, not always straight ahead. She reminded us that '*John the baptizer calls us to repentance and forgiveness. Bishop Tutu referred to the norm being compassion, gentleness and goodness that everyone can feel within themselves. Feeling angry and resentful therefore brings with it the unpleasantness in the pit of one's stomach. God wants peace for the human family. For those who put their trust in God, seeking*



*peace is an imperative, not an option. Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit who invites us into peace one step at a time. Where the Spirit is there is freedom.*' Jan concluded reminding us that in a time of change and transition change is the only constant. *Emmanuel is God With Us ... let's try not to get ahead of ourselves God's word is a light unto our feet a lamp unto our path. Let's walk the way of Peace one step at a time with the spirit of God.*'



Jan and Kay, with the musicians, sent us out with a sung blessing 'May the love of God surround you'.





**17/12, [Advent 3](#), [Isaiah 61:1-4,8-11](#); [Luke 1:46b-55](#)** Kirsty Bennett welcomed us to worship. On this third Sunday in Advent, the season when we when we anticipate the coming of Jesus, we focussed on joy and protest. We reflected on the readings from Isaiah and Luke. We thought about what protest can look like, and remembered that underlying any protest is a hope for a new way, a vision of a different world.



We welcomed Geoff Thompson (member of our congregation and Associate Professor and Co-ordinator of Studies in Systematic Theology at CTM) as our preacher. In his sermon '[Joy and Protest: a disorienting pair](#)' Geoff began by expressing his



gratitude for the way in which our pageants *'always have an edge be it through the use of satire, comedy, contextual imagination or social critique. Those edges have the effect of disorientation, a defamiliarizing of the familiar in ways that bring the ancient story alive.'* He went on to comment that *'the worship committee's choice of our paired Advent themes is similarly an exercise in defamiliarizing the familiar'*. Turning to the theme for this Sunday he said *'joy and protest, it's an interesting pair. It holds together two great themes of the Christian faith ... found in both the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures'*. Geoff reminded us of and explored Jesus' ministry, Mary's Magnificat, the Love Makes a Way movement and Martin Luther King's declaration in this context. He concluded *'Advent is a time of waiting. Yes it reminds us that the Christian hope is in many ways a deeply frustrating hope. What is promised is yet still on its way but this is not an inactive or passive hope. Again to paraphrase Matthew, it is a time to paint a joyful picture of the future to be pointed to. The future that God will eventually bring about. To live in harmony with it now and living in harmony with it now may well generate joy but also embolden us to protest against all that breaks that harmony. And so in this season of waiting with the Apostle Paul we cry in a voice that is both joyful and full of protest 'Maranatha come Lord Jesus'.*



**24/12, [Advent 4 & Christmas Eve](#), [Luke 1:26-38](#); [Psalm 89:1-4](#)** Saide Cameron welcomed us to worship. On a Sunday that was both Advent 4 and Christmas Eve we reflected on the theme for Advent 4 – love and waiting. The psalmist sings of God's steadfast love and Mary receives a visit from the Angel Gabriel. We wait to celebrate the fulfillment of the words that are spoken. Our



village had grown and we added to it during the service – with photos (or names) of ourselves, family and our pets.

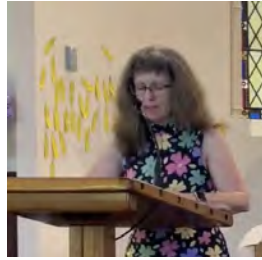


Cath's reflection '[Love in waiting](#)' offered an invitation to reflect on the time of waiting shared by Mary and Elizabeth. She began by sharing the story of a friend preparing for the cyclone in Queensland, of the waiting to hear that other family members were okay and went on to note the parallels between Jesus and John in Luke's gospel. Turning our attention to Mary and Elizabeth Cath reminded us that there is only so much you preparation you can do when waiting for something to occur. She wondered if there was something

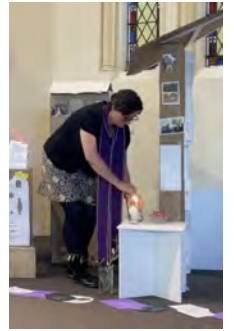
important to notice in the waiting, the waiting for Mary and the Elizabeth, our waiting now for a new minister to be called. Cath suggested that our waiting needs to be active. *'The end of the waiting is actually the beginning of something new. And strangely and mysteriously during Advent we are waiting for something that is actually already. God among us, God in human likeness. God is flesh.* Cath concluded *'Where is God in your life now? And what are you paying attention to in the waiting? God is with us, is always with us.'*



We wrote prayers on paper candles in response to Cath's reflection while the choir sang 'Heaven Everywhere'.



We concluded our worship lighting the Christ Candle.



As we light our Christ Candle, **we celebrate You as the Light of the World.**

We light the Christ Candle and remind ourselves **of the ways You overcome the darkness, and commit ourselves to working for peace & justice.**

We join with you in loving our world **with our breath, with our words, with our actions.**



## > Christmas Worship



### Blue Christmas

12/12, [Blue Christmas](#), Luke 2:1-14

Jenne Perlstein welcomed us to

worship. We heard the story of Jesus' nativity read in four parts. We lit the Advent candles in turn sharing the responsive prayer. Reflections were offered by Jenne, Saide Cameron and Cath James after which we sang a verse of our Advent song and were then invited to make a response.

**Hope and Darkness**, Luke 1:1-14. Jenne reminded us that *even in darkness we have hope for God is Love, a spark that appears, a glimmer.* Writing with charcoal on white paper we responded to 'What does darkness look like to you, where do you find hope?'

**Peace and Justice**, Luke 2:5-7. Saide reminded us that in her Magnificat, *Mary sings of a time of great upheaval. She sings of bringing down the powerful and lifting up the lowly, of filling the hungry and sending the rich away empty.* Writing with white chalk on black paper we responded to 'What is the peace that you long for, how will you seek justice?'

**Joy and Protest**, Luke 2:8-11. Saide invited us to *join our voices with Jesus and all who follow him, holding each other with love and care, lifting our voices in prayer and protest.* Writing with chalk or charcoal on purple paper we responded to *What does joy feel like to you, what protest are you called to make?*

**Love and Waiting**, Luke 2:12-14. Cath affirmed that *in Advent we remind ourselves of this hope; that in the end there will be peace, God desires us to experience joy along the way and holds us in love. If we can endure the hardship of waiting, new life will come.* We responded by gathering in a circle to celebrate Holy Communion laying our prayers around the Advent candles.

We concluded the service lighting the Christ Candle committing to *join with Christ in loving our world with our breath, with our words, with our actions.*



## Christmas Eve Pageant

**24/12, [It takes a village](#)** Cath welcomed us to worship and prayed *Loving God at Christmas we are reminded that you come to us as a baby, born in a humble stable human and divine, Let your love shine in our hearts, as we gather and tell the story once again of how you came to dwell among us. Amen*

We travelled with Mary & Joseph on their journey to Bethlehem during which they discover that they can hear their inner voices. Along the way they were joined by a host of familiar characters, a village to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

The choir, conducted by Elaine Potter, offered two songs 'Joseph's Lullaby' to begin the evening and 'Heaven Everywhere' to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.



It was an absolute joy to have our worship space filled, a village joining to celebrate with us.



photo by Saide Cameron

Joseph & Mary arrive in Bethlehem



The clouds obscure The Star



The Wise Ones work out the way to go



Joseph is worried



The baby is coming



The Angels are 'working it all out'



The baby is coming



The Shepherds are keeping watch



The Shepherds make a decision



The Wise Ones bring gifts



A moment of peace



The Angels visit



The Shepherds join them



The Wise Ones return



Too noisy, Mary & Jesus need a little space



Mary & Joseph can hear each other's inner voices



Missing their home village



photo by Ian Ferguson

The gathered village returns



Cath prays for the global village



A joy filled moment



Heaven Everywhere



A celebration



We offered our thanks to Rohan



The Holy family



## It takes a Village

written and directed by  
Rohan Hudson

*Cath offered our thanks to Rohan and all who were involved in bringing the pageant to life, especially the multi-aged cast.*

*We presented Rohan with a small hamper (in a bag) to share with Rosie.*



photo by Ian Ferguson

### Crew

Director:	Rohan Hudson	Front of House:	Julie McKinnon Peter McKinnon	Set Design:	Amelia Ware
Assistant Directors:	Cath James			Publicity:	Saide Cameron Blessing Mokgohloa
Pageant Team:	Saide Cameron, Cath James, Rohan Hudson, Blessing Mokgohloa	Sound Operator:	Michael Cameron	Catering:	Colleen Coath
		Laptop Operator:	Jamie Thom	Clean up:	Saide Cameron
		Livestream Operator:	Ray Cameron		
		Gimbal Operator:	James Clough		
		Photographer:	Kenna Morrison		

### Cast

Minister	Cath James	Donkey	Matilda Brown	Joseph's Inner Voice	Shepherds
Bible readings	Charlotte Lee	Mary's Inner Voice		Rohan Hudson	1 Joel Hallinan
<b>Cast</b> (in order of appearance)		Anya Kvensakul	Angels		3 Rafa Hallinan
Joseph	Oliver Turner	Wise Ones	Raphael	Clem Loynd	2 Daniel Broadstock
Mary	Harriet Loynd	1 Michael Langford	Gabriel	Briain Dixon	Baby Jesus Maeve Hardman
		3 Debra Langford	Michael	Amelia Ware	
		2 Dave Miller	Uriel	Matilda Brown	

### Musicians and Choristers

Choir Director:	Elaine Potter	Ryan Kambouris	Joanne Van Ravenswaaij	Musicians:	Elaine Potter
Accompanist:	Leigh Johnston	Deb Langford	Carolyn Wallace		(co-ordinator)
Choir:	Daniel Broadstock	Mick Langford	Anya Kvensakul		Brad Coath
	Helen Burnham	Joy Linton	Jess Kvensakul		Hudson Coath
	Glenice Cook	Tim Linton	Kay Quisenberry		Mikul Denison
	Greta Drimmel	Rosie O'Reilly	Jan Sebastian		Rosie O'Reilly
	Jean Evans	Kate Scull	Amelia Ware		



photo by Mal Rowe

[Look at the Worship book](#) or [send Saide an email for the Youtube link](#)



## Christmas Day



**25/12, [Christmas Day](#), Isaiah 9:2,6-7; Isaiah 11:6-9; Luke 2:1, 3-16; John 1:1-14** Kirsty Bennett welcomed us to worship on Christmas Day saying *Welcome to BUC this Christmas Day! The Advent time of preparation and waiting is over. Christ is born. God is with us: Emmanuel. Our service was*



*shaped by a series of readings offered by a village of voices, and we sang carols, listened to reflections and prayed prayers as we responded.*

*For our visitors Kirsty shared 'This year we created a village during Advent as we reflected on all the stories and actions and people that are a part of the Christmas story. This Advent we have also focused on the traditional themes of Advent, pairing them with another theme, and so we have reflected on hope and darkness, peace and justice, joy and protest, love and waiting. We bring all these themes together as we celebrated the Christ child's birth'.*



We welcomed Daniel Broadstock, member of our congregation, as our preacher. In his first reflection '[The four holy threads of Christmas](#)' Dan reflected on the themes of Hope. Peace, Joy and

Love. He said *'each of those threads is not simply a feeling or a sentiment. Instead, each of them is a conviction. A commitment. Each of them is a load-bearing wall in this church that we share together.'*



Helen Burnham offered an Early Word talking about Christmas Carols inviting us to share our favourites. Helen shared the history of carols noting that they were used to teach people who couldn't read or write about the stories of Christmas. Helen told us about one of her favourite carols 'The Virgin Mary' which we went on to sing.



Dan began his second reflection '[Jesus, Immanuel, God with us](#)' saying *'Friends, Merry Christmas! Today is a happy day. We call it a day of peace, and goodwill, and joy. But I wonder if there is any part of you that feels uncomfortable with that'* and commented on the many ways that people continue to suffer in our world. Dan explored the meaning and intention in Jesus' name 'Immanuel' and the dangers of ignoring it. He concluded *'But hold in your heart the name of Jesus, Immanuel, God With Us. Let that name grow in you, change you, remind you that you do not have God's special and unique favour, except that infinite and perfect love that abides in every human being. Let it remind you that privilege and wealth comes with responsibility. And let it drive you toward little acts of peace, charity, mercy, and love with which the Christ is building his kingdom.'*

Note - as indicated in the worship and reflection post the livestream for this service dropped out after Helen's Early Word.

## Christmas 1

**31/12, [Christmas 1](#), Luke 2:22-40** Natalie Sims welcomed us to worship. We continued our celebration of Christmas season, and let go of the old calendar year as we moved towards 2024, renewed



by the hope that comes with the birth of Christ. We also farewelled Jan and Kay as their time of ministry with us came to an end. As with all 5th Sundays the service offered a reflective focus.





Responding to the gospel, in her final reflection with us, Jan invited us to explore the gift of life with all its uncertainty. We moved into the hall singing Praise the Lord of hosts forever. In the hall Jan offered a wrapped box wondering what gifts might be in it. She then unwrapped a billowing parachute which a group of people raised and lifted as we considered things that we wanted to place into the parachute symbolic of letting go and new things that we want to take forward into the new year, the gifts of love, joy and peace through the challenging and joyous times.



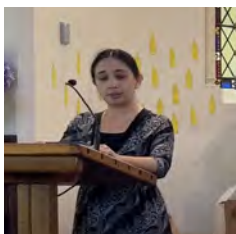
Ray Cameron offered Rev. Sharon Hollis' [Prayer for the New Year](#) as the Prayers of the People.

## > Farewell

Concluding the service on **31st December** we farewelled Jan and Kay, officiated by Jessica Kvensakul, Chair of Church Council.

### Acknowledgement of Ministry

Friends at the conclusion of Ian's ministry with us we welcomed Jan Sebastian as our supply minister for worship. Jan preached 2 Sundays a month from September and concluding today. Jan also participated in worship in other ways on an additional Sunday. Jan has provided support through her preaching as we moved into a time of transition.



Recognizing that it may be many months before a new minister is inducted into our congregation the Church Council, with the support of the supply ministry support team, reviewed the current model of supply ministry and discerned that it will not meet the ongoing needs of our congregation. The details of the new model will be finalized in the new year.

We have communicated this with Jan and listened to her honest and open feedback. There has been much sadness in this decision and it has not been easy.

Jan we want to take this opportunity to celebrate the ministry that you have offered through your preaching. We also want to celebrate the contributions that both you & Kay have made

through your ministry of dance, encouraging us to move as we worship and so beautifully, with Abi, inviting us to the celebration of Holy Communion in November. Your flags have added a layer of colour to our worship.

We wish you well in the ministry that you will continue to offer wherever God leads you.

*Jess invited us to celebrate the ministry that we all share with these familiar and beautiful words.*

There are diverse gifts

**but it is the same Spirit who gives them.**

There are different ways of serving God:

**But it is the same Lord who is served.**

God works through people in different ways:

**But it is the same God whose purpose is achieved through them all.**

Each one of us is given a gift by the Spirit:

**And there is no gift without its corresponding service.**

There is one ministry of Christ

**and in this ministry we all share.**

Together we are the body of Christ:

**And individually members of it.**



### Kay's response

In 2006, our connection began with you, our spiritual community at Brunswick Uniting. Jan then received an exit placement sending us out in 2008, Returning this year in a

different capacity has added to our lives with previous and new relationships and experiences.

Your gifts and our gifts merged together to express God's love through words, worship, music, action, negotiations and juggling. We have been inspired.

Thank you for your love and interest toward us both. May you continue to explore ways to express, through caring and proclaiming.

May you find ways to encourage each other in their giftedness by sincere interest.

On this freight train on life may you find weays to care for yourself. May you relax into silent pockets of time when you need that. With love, Kay

### Jan's response



Thank you for having Kay and me as invited guests. In many ways it felt like coming home after 20 years or more. Familiar faces, some had moved on and many new faces.

When I was asked by Presbytery to come full-time as long term

Supply Minister I knew there would be challenges and joys. What I didn't expect what was that it would go to 0.8 and result in 0.6 focusing on planning worship and Annie focusing on pastoral care. Trying to navigate Presbytery guidelines, expectations, assumptions, my own included, with the ministry support team Cath and Kenna, Saide and Gwen, I often felt caught in the middle struggling to find a quiet place.

There's so much going on in this amazing community, so much happening, finding a quiet place can be challenging yet you are blessed here. The most challenging was being offered 0.8 which would include worship and pastoral care, accepting this and the ministry support team and the council deciding on a different model. That is purely your choice.

We all have learned much from the process and that is a good thing. To learn is a good thing, yet by far the joys and blessings have outnumbered the challenges. I am grateful for the opportunity to minister with the ministry team Cath, Peter and Annie who was here for a while, to work closely with Cath and to craft reflections for you and many who are not here today. To minister with each unique and gifted liturgist has been an incredible experience and experiencing the services birthed and supported by the musicians, the singers, the tech team and each one of us is unforgettable. Dancing with Kay and Abi at

the invitation to communion has given us courage to dance on to sing in the choir and to fly in at the end of the pageant was a delight.

Yes we acknowledge the sadness of ending now, very different not taking you through until your called Minister arrives, that is different. Yet difference is okay sometimes it's hard to sit with difference but this has been different and whatever unfolds for you will unfold in the new year. I assumed we'd be here longer but we know what assumptions are, that's right it's difficult when we assume things we can get things a little bit different than we thought. Assumptions are tricky and they can trip us up we thought we'd be here longer but that's okay.

I appreciate the German saying 'Fest ist genug'. Feast, yes enough is a feast. This time has been a feast, to stay on any longer Kay and I might have got into 'gestion' and so might you. Enough is a feast so let's be satisfied, satisfied there's also a German saying called 'bomat', just be satisfied. So we are satisfied.

It's time now for us to rest a while. If you remember back on the one of the first Sundays there were pictures of the Mitta Mitta River, my country. We will return there to be rejuvenated in the next little while, to be on country, to be still, to be quiet, to listen to the trees, to listen to the river, to listen to the creek and to listen to that still small voice inside. It's time for us to rest and it's time, possibly, to visit Kay's family as I mentioned.

So your gift to us is to refocus. Refocus and I guess that's the gift for you, to refocus for the new New Year, refocus so that the lens is clear and your next step will be clear. God's great peace in this next chapter as you navigate the path forward for your calling your permanent minister.

Great peace in this next chapter and to all those who have followed online while we've been here and all those that are dancers that have tuned in nationally and internationally we say farewell and especially to Cass in Leon France, go well dear friend, go well dear friends.

*Jess gave Jan and Kay a Nova Cinema Give voucher in thanks on behalf of the congregation. Natalie offered a prayer of blessing and we sang 'May God's Sheltering Wings'*

Loving God we celebrate the gifts and ministries that we are called to share in this space and beyond our doors. Today we ask your blessing on Jan and Kay, giving thanks for their many gifts and for the time they have ministered with us. Hold them in your love and be with them as they listen for your call and discern new opportunities, Amen



## From Jan and Kay...



To Jan and Kay,  
Thank you for everything you have done for BUC during your time with us. We will always remember your kind words and beautiful dance and movement during worship.  
All the best for your next steps in the journey.  
Jessica Kuanshal  
Church Council Chair

Thank you so much for the thoughtful Nova Voucher, we are really looking forward to using it! Thank you also for the card, and to Bev Evans the beautiful fuchsias on the card. Love Jan and Kay



photo by Kirsty Bennett, 24/12

## > Olive Way Christmas Party

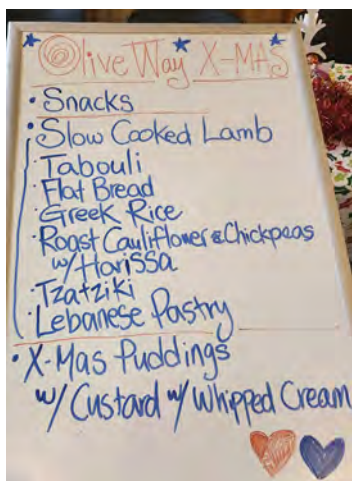
**December 12th** dawned as a perfect Summer's day. At 12.30 pm the doors of the BUC Hall were opened to guests for the annual Olive Way Christmas lunch. This year guests were invited to RSVP. Volunteers hosted one or two tables. Relationships were reignited or new acquaintances made. Earlier the same day and the day before the Hall had been transformed. Places for 100 guests beautifully arranged by a team of Volunteers. Colourful table cloths, flower decorations, individually wrapped cutlery sets, Christmas crackers. In the kitchen preparation began on Monday with the amazing co-ordination of Ruth Sandy. A tantalising aroma of herbs and garlic floating out from the slow cooking lamb in the ovens on Tuesday morning notched up our anticipation of the meal to come.



A sumptuous menu was a nod to middle eastern flavours – dips and flatbread, tabbouli, slow roasted lamb or a veggie roast, roasted cauliflower with chick peas. Followed up with traditional Christmas pudding and custard. Christmas crackers, silly hats, soft drinks – what an occasion.

The event would not have happened without the support of many volunteers. In addition to regular Olive way volunteers, Ruth's callout to the BUC congregation attracted more volunteers. The beautiful flowers were provided and arranged by friends from Jesuit Social Services. Peter welcomed everyone and said Grace. Later there were special thank-you's to those co-ordinating and volunteering. It was a fabulous day and one to remember. Maybe you will attend next year? Regular volunteers for the weekly Olive Way program are always welcome to fill gaps or in an ongoing capacity.





Join The Olive Way Facebook Group to keep up to date with weekly happenings and to view photos from the Christmas Lunch. <https://www.facebook.com/TheOliveWay>

To find out more about the Olive Way weekly meal and social program contact Ruth Sandy [ruthbrunswick8@gmail.com](mailto:ruthbrunswick8@gmail.com) or Peter Blair [oliveway.pastor@gmail.com](mailto:oliveway.pastor@gmail.com)

Helen Rowe

Photos from the Olive Way Facebook Group page

## > Shortbread & Christmas Cards for Stewart Lodge



Once more we were able to share some love with the people of Stewart Lodge through our baking and card writing. A big thank you to everyone who helped make this possible.

We were able to give each resident a bag of shortbread and a handwritten card, as well as some extra shortbread for the staff and to put on their Christmas table.

Stella and Vivian (the proprietors of Stewart Lodge) were delighted, and told us it is something that residents really look forward to every year. They emailed their thanks: *Thank you very much for the shortbread and thoughtful Gluten Free ones as well. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your church family.*



Kirsty Bennett



The Christmas cards were created using photos taken by Ian for Advent 2022 worship

## > Concluding Christmas

Throughout the season of Advent & the first two Christmas services we paid attention to our paired themes for Advent - Hope & Darkness, Peace & Justice, Joy & Protest and Love & Waiting. We listened and responded with our own prayers at the Blue Christmas service. In our Christmas Eve Pageant we journeyed with Mary & Joseph to Bethlehem and celebrated that we are all part of a village and many villages. On Christmas Day we were reminded of the holy threads of Christmas and of the importance of paying attention to Jesus' name 'Immanuel'. We concluded the season with the invitation to let go and step forward, remembering the gift of Christmas.

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 cast who learnt their lines and told the story with conviction, to Rohan and the whole pageant team, to Amelia and the village team for the amazing village, Elaine who conducted the pageant choir and to all who sang, lifting our hearts with joy, to John, Jan, Geoff and Cath who drew our attention to what God might be saying to us about hope, peace, joy and love, about the birth of Jesus. And finally to the AV team and everyone who worked behind the scenes to support the work of worship during this busy time.

Saide Cameron

# > 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. Donations can still be made on our [BUC page on the Act for Peace website](#). Our congregation has donated **\$7,395** by this method.

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

- Support for families forced to flee Afghanistan being cared for by [Community World Service Asia \(CWSA\)](#)
- Providing medical and psychosocial care and helping to protect girls and women from gender-based violence with the support of [The Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission \(EOC-DICAC\)](#)
- Helping Syrian refugees receive support through the [Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees \(DSPR\)](#)
- Helping Sri Lankan refugees longing to return home, supported by the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) and [Act for Peace's local partner in India, Organization for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation \(OFERR\)](#)
- provide practical care so refugees and people who have been displaced living in camps on the Thai-Burma border can live in safety and dignity and know that they are loved and not forgotten with the support of [The Border Consortium \(TBC\)](#)



At a time when Christian kindness is needed more than ever, your support helps Act for Peace's local partners provide practical care to people in urgent need around the world. [Thank you for being part of the Christmas Bowl.](#)

## FUNdraising

Our FUNdraising stalls were back again after worship on **3rd & 10th December** with tables loaded with delicious baked treats from Natalie Papworth and Glenice, gift cards featuring photos taken by Ian for Christmas 2022, Bev Evan's Gingerbread houses, plants from Helen Rowe's garden, cards from Matilda McClintock and Saide Cameron's preserves, cakes & puddings.

Saide also hosted a table at the Food Co-op Distribution Day on **16th December**.

It is not possible to provide a break down of the sales however at least **\$1,600** was paid into our FUNdraising account ready to be transferred to Act for Peace - thank you to everyone who contributed and 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, at least **\$2,362**
- donation through the BUC account: Uniting Church Brunswick, ANZ Bank Brunswick, 013-236 8687863
- online to the [Act for Peace BUC page](#)
- **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.**