



A Christmas Choice

In a country where there are no claims to Christian heritage (such as we make in Australia), and where the churches are controlled and restricted in what they can and cannot do, Christmas is a full-on experience. There are amazing lights in the street, Christmas trees, fake snow, reindeer, fat-red Santas, elves and plastic silver holly and mistletoe. The decorations make ours look quite subdued. There are very few nativity scenes, religious carols and no hint that this is somehow about Jesus.

I asked what Christmas means to the community and why they celebrate it. The answer was a little chilling. We like it because it is what happens in America and countries like that. We seem to have exported Christmas without a soul. It is another cultural export like Coke, McDonalds and Apple. It has a completely new meaning and new content. Christmas has become a festival of consumption and materialism.

There is no message of grace and hope and nothing about God who enters the world in vulnerability. Also no story of outsiders who worship and no danger or risk to the vulnerable baby or his parents.

Now one response is a cry of frustration and angst. A cry based on the assumption that we have the celebration right in our own settings. Another may be to pause and reflect on the way this faith festival is perceived. Perceptions reflect reality.

Is our Christmas a time of thanksgiving for God's radical gift of love in Jesus? Do we pause and check our planning to ensure we affirm the heartbeat of Christmas? The Gospel message is that those who have no right to claim God's love because of sin and marginalisation, are loved and forgiven. This message is the opposite to that proclaimed by the jolly fat red man – 'If you are good, you get!' The gospel message is we have a grace that we have no right to claim.

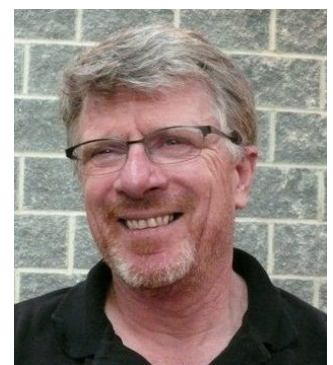
Vietnam celebrates the Christmas of the 'west'. During the year the churches in parts of Vietnam are restricted to a worship service of no more than 10! What these churches have discovered is that no one seems to worry about what they do at Christmas and they are free to have larger gatherings of people (to celebrate Christmas!). They are free once a year to share their faith in public! It is quite an annual centration and one they look forward to!

When in South Korea for Christmas I discovered that Christmas is a time for worship and prayer – no Christmas Dinner, gifts or family gatherings. They have a public holiday for worship! Christmas was not at all what I expected.

Can we make Christmas part of our own spiritual discipline? Here are a couple of things to try...

1. Eat simply! Maybe less can more.
2. Give thoughtfully and purchase goods that are ethically sourced or handmade (watch out for Christmas Choices at embody.org.au).
3. Give a GMP Great Gift at www.gmp.org.au/shop/c/great-gifts
4. Take time in worship to give thanks for the grace of God in Jesus.
5. Plan a way of being generous in the face of the needs of the world and give to one of the Christmas Appeals such as Churches of Christ Overseas Aid or the Christmas Bowl.
6. Take opportunities to gently share how we understand Christmas.

*John Gilmore
Executive Officer
Global Mission Partners*



Christmas Appeal 2016

They were fleeing a violent home. Escaping with little more than the clothes she was wearing and the love for her two children and, as is often the case, uncertainty and struggles. Just this week, the young lady in her desperation, contacted the CareWorks office for support.

With Christmas approaching, one wonders how she will be celebrating with her family on Dec 25. This story could be repeated over and over at any of our Church care centres.

Around this time each year CareWorks turns its attention to the plight of people who are fleeing domestic violence and will struggle to celebrate at Christmas time.

Unfortunately, this year CareWorks was not successful in securing a grant for the purchase of Christmas hampers **but you can help to bring a little love and light to some struggling families this Christmas.**

Selfie Sunday

If your church hasn't been involved in Selfie Sunday yet, it's not too late! Upcoming Christmas celebrations provide a great opportunity to take a photo of your church community. It also gives the chance to photograph pre-Christmas activities going on during the week.

Churches are able to upload their own photos and information onto the Selfie Sunday website. <http://selfiesunday.org/> If you have any issues with this, email contact@selfiesunday.org

Soon the next stage of the Selfie Sunday website will be completed, and we will start to see the church portraits appear. I hope that EVERY Church of Christ in Australia will be part of the Big Picture!



Hampstead Gardens Church of Christ

*Janet Woodlock
Federal Coordinator*

Sponsor a Family

Your gift of \$36 will purchase a Foodbank Christmas hamper, packed with traditional Christmas fare and delivered to domestic violence shelters.

Go to www.givenow.com.au/careworkssa

Or you can send your cheque to:

PO Box 306, Torrensville Plaza, 5031 or
contact the office on 8234 5802.

Buy a Gift

Gifts of children's toys can be purchased and be **delivered to one of the drop off points by December 8th**, for sorting and distribution in good time for Christmas. The drop off locations are at the participating Churches:

Aldgate, Blair Athol, Happy Valley, Hewett, Maylands (call Russell to arrange time 0418 840 846), Noarlunga, along with Marion Life, Northern Communities of Hope, and CareWorks Torrensville. (We are grateful to Life Care, the Rotary Club of Charles Sturt & Grange and the Flagstaff Golf Club for their support with gifts.)

Reappointment Unsuccessful

The State Office will be going through a period of transition following the ballot held in conjunction with Annual Convention on 12th November. The State Board recommendation to renew Greg Elsdon's appointment as State Minister of Churches of Christ in SA & NT for a further five years failed to obtain the 75% support required for reappointment required by the Constitution.

This decision of State Conference presents a number of challenges for the members of State Board as they consider the implications of this response to their recommendation. They will also plan the transition for the work of State Office amongst our Churches. It is important that the services provided to local congregations are maintained.

State Board meets in early December, and will communicate formally with all member churches once decisions have been made regarding the way forward.

There has been much emotion around the outcome of the ballot. We want to harness that emotion for good and for unity, and not allow it to bring division and destruction. Pray for one another, for the State Office team, and for Greg and his family.

We have a wise and faithful God who loves all. Let us live in that love as we move forward.

Doug Walladge, President

Living hopefully

Some extracts from Greg Elsdon's Conference address



Christian hope is always a gift from God because it comes to us from the very *character* of God. It is not mere wishful thinking or naïve optimism. Rather, it's a deep sense of confidence in the graceful character of the God of Jesus who is for us, not against us, and who will not leave us abandoned. We have learned to know that this God loves us unconditionally and lives within us and within our communities – inviting us, leading us, accompanying us on a pilgrimage into the life of the risen Christ.

Our hope is in the character of God as grace and reconciliation, and our experience of hope, or our 'living hopefully', is born out of our commitment to living together as people who actually believe that, and make decisions and choose priorities and ways of living that testify to God's 'different way' – God's Kingdom way.

There is a big difference between **being confident** and **being hopeful**. Am I *hopeful* about the future of Christian faith and the communities that will be shaped by it? **Yes I am.** But am I *confident* that by our hard work, and strategic planning, and clever use of sure-fire programs and marketing strategies to make ourselves more attractive we will some how be able to "make the Church great again". **No I am not.**

And that is such a relief, such a liberating place to be in – having the courage to let go of the things we do and think that no longer bring hope – and giving ourselves over to God's mission of love and grace and restoration in a world that is desperately seeking something that makes sense of our common human existence.

Instead of fretting over whether our congregation is going to make it for another five, or ten or even twenty years, what would happen if we chose to live in the hope that God is always with us, calling us to be transformed 'into the image of his son'. It doesn't require a budget, it doesn't require a master plan - we don't necessarily even need to know how to go about it! We simply need to make ourselves available to being transformed by God, and the courage to live our lives transparently among our neighbours.

Peace lamps

from the Holy Land -
praying for peace

For information go to:

sacc.asn.au or contact
the South Australian Council of Churches
65 Flinders Street; Adelaide; Ph: (08) 8215 0300



Salisbury East Church of Christ 40th Anniversary

We are celebrating our anniversary on **February 5th 2017**. We invite past members and interested people to join us for Worship at 10am followed by lunch.

If you plan to come, for catering purposes please contact Bev Keep on beverleykeep@gmail.com or ring 0413 738 474.



7th December:

Strengthening Families and
Protecting Children.
Facilitator: Jo Jarvis



COCOA

envelopes will be arriving at your church shortly. Thank you for promoting these and remembering our partners at Christmas time especially. With your help, Churches of Christ Overseas Aid (COCOA) works in partnership with communities to raise their standard of living, empower local leaders and give hope for the future. Your generosity makes a huge difference to areas of education, community projects, water and sanitation, livelihoods and emergency relief. This Christmas join us in responding to God's goodness by joining with us in His mission. Encourage people to also include a positive message (see inside flap of the COCOA envelope) and to pray for our partners this Christmas. There is a PPT slide available for promoting these in your church; check it out under the 'COCOA' tab on <http://www.inpartnership.org.au/resources>

CWConnect Newsletter

Did you know that you can subscribe to the bi-monthly CareWorks Connect email newsletter? Go to www.cwsa.org.au/connect, put your details into the sign up form and click on submit.

Have you seen our website lately? It's had a makeover with new features and content. Check it out at www.churchesofchrist-sa.org.au We would love to hear what you think so send any feedback or comments to website administrator, Mark Riessen, mriessen@churchesofchrist-sa.org.au



Christmas Choices encourages people to make conscious choices about consumption at this festive time of year. From 1-6 December *embody* will profile companies that give back through their sales and production to empower and support those who are exploited in our world. Head to the *embody* facebook page and instagram to learn more about these organisations and how, this Christmas, you can give "gifts, that give back".

You are invited to a
Ugandan Evening
in support of

cornerstone
FOUNDATION AUSTRALIA

With Wayne & Bev Stevens

*Have fun experiencing
Uganda's beauty, wildlife,
Acholi culture & food!*



21 January 2017 at 7pm

Hampstead Gardens Church of Christ
28 Gambia Ave, Hampstead Gardens



Donation kindly requested
Bring drinks and some food/nibbles
Coffee, tea and cake provided

If you have any Christmas events that you'd like publicized on the Churches of Christ (SA/NT) app, please send the info and a photo, if you have one, to Mark Riessen at:
mriessen@churchesofchrist-sa.org.au

You're invited to a night of
Christmas Carols

Please join us for our
Christmas Services

Lots of Music and Entertainment plus ...
BBQ ... Coffee Stall ... Jumping Castle ... Wheelie Kids

When: Saturday 10th December

Time: 5.30pm Pre-Entertainment
7.30pm Carols

Where: Marion Church of Christ Car Park

Bring: Your family, friends and a chair/rug

Community Service of the MARION Church of Christ
Corner Marion Road & Alawoona Avenue
Mitchell Park SA 5043
p 8277 7388 | e admin@marioncc.org.au
www.marioncc.org.au



Sat 24 December | 7pm Family Celebration
Sat 24 December | 11pm Candlelight Service
Sun 25 December | 9am Christmas Day
Sun 1 January | 10am Service only

Marion
Church of Christ

MarionLIFE



You are invited to a service of

Lessons and Carols

in the

Gartrell Church

cnr Prescott Tce and
Alexandra Ave; Rose Park

with

CANTABILE SINGERS

on

Sunday December 11

at 10 am

Choir Director: Denise Rothall

Accompanist: Meredith Wilson

gartrellchurch.org.au

cantablesingers.org.au

Cantabile
Singers



Christmas Services at Gartrell are:

December 13 at 10 am: Lessons and Carols

December 19 at 4.30 pm: Open church for children and their families to hear the Christmas story, visit the Nativity and engage in Christmas crafts.

December 24 at 11.15 pm: Christmas Eve Carols and Reflections by candlelight.

December 25 at 10 am Christmas day: Worship

COOPERATING CHURCHES OF WEST ADELAIDE INC.
PRESENTS
**CHRISTMAS CAROLS
FESTIVAL 2016**

Lockleys Reserve, (Mellor Park),
Cnr Henley Beach Road and White Avenue
Wednesday 21st December 2016
6pm - 9.30pm

Food and Refreshments from 6pm
Carols and Entertainment
commences 7.30pm

It will be a great night for the whole family to enjoy,
sing-along, have dinner & enjoy the Christmas Spirit.
Bring a picnic rug & deck chairs.

Featuring Henley and Grange West Torrens Concert Band,
the Monteverdi Singers & Special Guest Artists.
Father Christmas will be there too with Samoyed Sled.

Available to purchase BBQ, Fairy Floss, Ice Cream and Cool Drinks,
Hot Coffee and Tea. Glow sticks and Gloware safe candles.

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY
THE CITY OF WEST TORRENS.



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