



Witness



Nativity of Christ Lorenzo Lotto 1523

St Ninian's Uniting Church, Lyneham

December 2025 – January 2026

St Ninian's Uniting Church, Cnr Mouat and Brigalow Sts, Lyneham

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Treasurer	Gwen Souter treasurer@stninians.org.au
Finance Committee Convenor	John Cutts (as above)
Chairperson, Property Committee	Cheryl Wright
Honorary Pastoral Assistant	Julie Gillespie

Services of Worship at St Ninian's each Sunday at 9.30 am.

Christmas Services

Lessons and Carols - 14th December at 9.30am

Christmas Eve - 24th December, 6pm - Community Carols

Christmas Day - 25th December, 9am.

MATERIAL FOR NEXT WITNESS IS DUE ON: Sunday 25 January

From the Minister

CHRISTMAS LOVE, HOPE, JOY, PEACE AND FORGIVENESS

We are in the time we celebrate Advent, the time of waiting for the miraculous birth of Christ Jesus, and we can't help but find ourselves reflecting just what that means for those of us who follow Jesus the one who came into the world to save the world. Heartbreakingly our world is all too often marked by conflict, confusion, and hurt in one way or another. We are familiar with the story of the journey Joseph and Mary took to Bethlehem for the census which is a great reminder to us of the transformative power of love, hope, joy, peace and the freeing power of forgiveness, especially in a divided society in 2025.

At the heart of Christ's message is love – the unconditional love of God that was made known to everyone in the humble birth of a child born in a stable manger. This agape love isn't conditional upon our behaviours or achievements; it simply exists, calling us to embrace our intrinsic worth as beloved members in Christ's family. In a world where anger and hurts are quick to surface causing resentment, the love of Jesus invites us to respond with compassion and empathy. As we celebrate Christ's birth, our challenge is to continually and intentionally reflect on how we express Christ's unconditional love in our daily lives. Expressing ourselves in ways that both encourage and uplift not just the people we love, but inclusive of those we interact with helps us to build stronger relationships. Jesus' love teaches us the importance of nurturing a culture of thoughtful kindness instead of hostility.

Love is intertwined with hope which we see as Christ's light shining through the darkest moments of our lives and any cracks in relationship with Christ. The world into which Jesus was born was rife with oppression and despair, yet his arrival brought with it the promise of redemption and transformation. In our own lives, where conflicts may seem insurmountable, we are reminded that hope isn't just a vague wish for better days but a deep and reassuring trust in God's ability to

bring about change. This hope encourages us to rise above cynicism and to believe that reconciliation is possible, even in the face of disagreement. Hope inspires us to take actionable steps toward healing relationships, reminding us that the season of Christmas calls for optimism in our interactions and aspirations for a future of hope rather than conflict and despair.

When we know love and hope then joy isn't too far away. Joy is another wonderful aspect of Christ's birth that resonates in a world often overshadowed by the darkness of negativity. The angels proclaimed, "I bring you good news of great joy." This joy doesn't depend on our circumstances but comes directly from our relationship with God – a joy that often serves as a soothing balm when we feel wounded. In the midst of conflict, embracing joy can be transformative, encouraging us to celebrate the small victories and blessings when we experience them in our lives. Those small moments of joy help us to grow a spirituality that uplifts and unites us rather than continuing to hold grudges and divisiveness. When we allow ourselves to take on Christ's joy, we have the capacity to become conduits of positivity, encouraging others to rise above their struggles and make a joyful noise unto the Lord.

The birth of Jesus introduces the ultimate gift of peace, a tranquillity that comes from knowing we are reconciled with God and one another. "Peace on earth" became the proclamation as we herald in the King of a new era creating the dawning of a time when relationships can be healed through forgiveness. In a society where miscommunication and harsh words can lead to deep rifts, we are called to be peacemakers. This means being intentional in seeing the need to mend broken relationships, to listen with empathy without judgement or making presumptions which often are the cause of unintended consequences, hurt and pain, and advocating for understanding amidst disagreements.

One other significant thing the birth of Jesus exemplifies is the power of forgiveness. At the right time Jesus would go out amongst the people, choosing disciples, teaching us about

the importance of forgiving others just as we have been forgiven. In a world that often clings to grievances, forgiveness can be the **circuit breaker of hurt, permitting us to release** the burdens of resentment. During this Christmas season, each one of us is invited to reflect deeply on who we may need to forgive, offering a pathway to healing for ourselves and those around us.

As we all join together and celebrate Christ's birth, may we be inspired to embody Christ's love, hope, joy, peace, and forgiveness. As we do this, we can contribute to a society that reflects the image, behaviour and characteristics of Christ's transformative power within his birth, as we continue to nurture a spirit of unity and light in times of fear and darkness.

In His Service

Rev'd Sharon Cutts

Christmas Services

Lessons and Carols - 14th December at 9.30am

Christmas Eve - 24th December, 6pm
Community Carols

Christmas Day - 25th December, 9am

Sunday Service now on ZOOM

We would like to encourage anyone who cannot attend Sunday's Service in person - for any reason - to join us online.

Our Zoom connection has recently been improved, making it easier and clearer than before.

If you visit the St Ninian's home page (stninians.org.au), simply click the "Join Us on ZOOM" button. The service will open automatically for you.

The sound quality is now excellent, and you will be able to hear both the speaker and the choir clearly.

We hope this helps everyone feel included and connected, wherever you may be.

News of People

Our thoughts and prayers are with: Kingsley Sutton as he is unwell at present; Mary Featherston who is hospital awaiting a Care Home placement; Robyn Russell who remains in North Canberra Hospital; and Saku Richards who is in palliative care.

Our best wishes and prayers go with Kevin Playford and Robert Dolamore as they embark on a posting to the Hague this month.

Congratulations and best wishes to: Norma Beard who celebrated her 99th birthday on 25 November; Judith Shaw who recently celebrated her 90th birthday with family and friends; and Beth Roberts who had a big O birthday in October.

Women's Activity Group (WAGs)

At the beginning of October we had our last coffee outing to the Heritage Nursery at Yarralumla. As always it was good to enjoy being able to chat and some of us took the opportunity to have a browse through the nursery itself. Late in October we had a very interesting talk from Jennifer Hobson about her adventures in the UK where she did some of her nursing training and her subsequent nursing experiences as a bush nurse in outback Queensland. We were all very impressed at her courage to take on the responsibilities of nursing in such a remote area. Travelling from Sydney to her destination in her little blue car was impressive to say the least. Our last guest speaker for the year was very entertaining indeed. Olwynne Anne Cook, a former WREN, had been invited to a garden party at Buckingham Palace. The timing happened to coincide with the lead up to the coronation of King Charles so it was a very special time to be in London. Her descriptions of the dignitaries and the amazing organisation that took place were very interesting to hear. We have just had our end of year lunch at Yarralumla Golf Club which has become one of our favourite venues. This year we had 17

members and guests which was an excellent turnout. Food and conversations were enjoyed by all. Our last meeting for the year will be on December 11th and as well as discussing suggestions for next year's activities we will be celebrating a special birthday for Gwen. Thanks to everyone who have supported and contributed to our Wags group and we look forward to seeing you all in 2026.

Irene Reid

Uniting Church Adult Fellowship (UCAF)

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Our final speaker of the year was Jane Allen who joined us at our meeting in October. Jane told us about her challenging time working as a volunteer at an aged care unit in Amala, Gordon. Without any training and few resources, she was equal to the challenge and provided entertainment and occupation to the residents in such a caring and respectful way. She persisted for several years adapting her approach to changing needs and abilities. We were impressed and sincerely appreciative of her work and dedication.
We continued our fund raising efforts by participating in the Market@TheMeetingPlace initiative. It was definitely an easier format than our previous book and clothing sales, taking less time to set up and move items back to storage, an important consideration for our changing demographic. Less assistance was needed but we were pleased with the help received from Radford students and also other members of St Ninian's family and friends. We would especially like to thank Rev Sharon and John Cutts and Cheryl Wright for all the work they have put into this venture.
Our annual Christmas lunch was held at Quan's Kitchen, Kippax Fair, an enjoyable opportunity to share a plentiful Chinese banquet. Our last meeting on 3 December will be a discussion of Christmas times in the past. Lastly we would like to wish everyone a happy Christmas and New Year with family and friends. We hope we can move forward together, finding new ways to continue on our

Christian journey, serving God by helping each other, our church and community.

Pat Semmler

Church Council

As we draw to a close for 2025 and enter the "festive" season may you and your family be blessed by the Holy Spirit.

The financial position of the St Ninian's Congregation is tracking close to budget over the first 4 months of the financial year. Offerings remain strong and facility income is going well. Maintenance expenditure is slightly more than expected.

Major maintenance still to be done is the guttering of the Church. Fortunately, we have received a grant from Heritage ACT which will cover about half of the cost, the work should be done early 2026.

The key project has been a real success with the installation of the electronic lock on the Hall. This has eliminated about 58 keys that were in circulation and we hope this reduces the risk of unauthorised entry. Well done to all who have embraced the change, feedback from user groups has been all positive.

The recent election of Church Council for 2026 resulted in all nominees being elected unanimously.

Church council for 2026 will be: Rev Sharon Cutts, Alan Briscoe, Beth Roberts, Cheryl Wright, Gwen Souter, Kerry Wright, Kingsley Sutton, Marion McConnell, Neville Biggs, Stephen Priest and Tim Hobson. Church Council Office Bearers will be elected by CC in the January meeting.

John Cutts, Secretary

Choir

Just a brief note this time, as the choir has been very busy preparing for the Advent Lessons and Carols on 14 December. The choir looks forward to returning in the New Year after a well-deserved break.

Safe Church Report

The Safe Church Team acknowledges all our volunteers and leaders at St Ninian's Uniting Church. Thank you for volunteering and serving our church and community over many years. We wish to share the latest message from the NSW/ACT Synod Culture of Safety Team

The Christian life is marked by service. Jesus taught about it and modelled it and then commanded his followers to go and do it. He called leaders in his church to be servant leaders. That is to lead, not for their own benefit but of those they lead. Therefore, servant leaders must be safe leaders.

Our community and Governments also expect us to be safe leaders. In NSW on 1st February 2022 and in the ACT on 1st August 2024, the 10 Child Standards became mandatory for churches.

Standard 5 involves the screening and appointment of leaders (paid and volunteer). If an appropriate screening and appointment process is followed by ALL leaders it can help weed out unsuitable leaders and discourage potential abusers and protect healthy leaders.

The Uniting Church in NSW/ACT has therefore developed a Screening Policy that applies to "all Uniting Church organisations and employees, contractors and volunteers in NSW and ACT. This policy sets out the basic screening requirements for all leaders (paid and volunteer)

The Safe Church Team (Janice Schroder and John Cutts) will be gradually beginning the new screening process for all St Ninian's UC volunteers and leaders in the coming months. It will include an application, nomination of referees, screening questions, the signing of the Code of Conduct and a short interview/chat with Janice or John.

We thank you for your support of keeping everyone safe at St Ninian's Uniting Church.

Janice Schroder and John Cutts

Events

ST NINIAN'S GRAND FETE
Saturday 1 November 2025

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Another successful Fete, but as usual there are always things that can be improved upon. Our most noticeable area of concern was the lack of a couple of people who could relieve for a short while on high volume or low staff stalls so that people could have a break.

While most stall holders were able to rotate their staff to have a break others were so busy they didn't get a chance to have a cuppa and a look around. This was evident especially on the BBQ, White Elephant and the Kitchen. We missed the Tongan food stall this year. Some stalls also needed extra people to help pack up at the end.

We also missed having our roving announcer to direct people to special areas of interest.

It was great to have our usual Entertainment back, Mervyn and Heather, Raio de Sol, Cyrenes and this year we were very pleased to add the Performance Group from Dance Northside. They were very well received with many positive comments from onlookers and all have indicated they would like to be involved again next year. Overall, a very happy and successful day.

Cheryl Wright

MARKET@ THE MEETING PLACE

Market@ The Meeting Place has conducted 5 sessions since it started in September. As the knowledge of this activity spreads we are seeing return visitors, numbers fluctuating but achieving the targets we informally set at the outset. Financial expectations are also being met. Much of what we are doing is learn as we go, trying to determine what sells, what attracts people, best form of advertising. New signs have been made for the roadside exposure, flyers going into shops, Facebook (look up Market@ The Meeting Place) radio announcements etc. The best form of advertising is telling people about it, take some of the small flyers and give them to your friends, come and visit so you know what you're talking about.

Next session will be Friday 12th and Saturday 13th December with focus being Christmas. Market@ The Meeting Place will kick off 2026 on the Friday 13th and Saturday 14th FEBRUARY and this will be a full on UCAF Clothing Sale with all proceeds going to UCAF.

Look forward to seeing you at The Market@ The Meeting Place.

WHY I MAKE A CHRISTMAS LIGHTS DISPLAY

The ultimate reason would probably be that I like seeing people enjoy something I have created. Perhaps that includes an element of egotism, but really, don't we all get some pleasure from something we have accomplished and people thank us for it and appreciate what we have done? I don't believe that pride in the accomplishment of something worthwhile is a bad thing.

However, my motives for doing the display each year are driven by a life-long love of all things associated with Christmas. As a child, I was the one who started the family tradition of putting up Christmas decorations. As my parents had survived the Great Depression and the war years that followed, I supposed decorating the house seemed wasteful and frivolous. Nevertheless, I bought some crepe paper, cut ribbons out of it and convinced my older brother to sew the strips into streamers. I was too young to be let loose on Mum's precious Singer treadle sewing machine. I then snipped the edges with scissors and twisted the streamers before tacking them to the cornices. I also managed to persuade the man over the road to cut some branches off his cypress pine trees so I could tie them together for a Christmas tree. Then came the beginning of a long-standing practice, I used some wire, torch batteries and torch bulbs which I painted with water colours to make four lights for my tree.

When our children were small. We drove around the district at night looking at the Christmas trees that people had lit up, usually at windows or glass doors, because our own tree was rather more bargain basement. We would take them into the city to see the shop displays, especially in the Mc Whirters store windows. This was the biggest department store in Brisbane then. It was later taken over by Myer and is now a residential development. There were life-size figures depicting Christmas and children's storybook characters. Bit by bit, our own home display grew over the years.

I arrived at The Grove just a few weeks before Christmas three years ago. I saw the Christmas lights display in the village and was so impressed that I decided I would live

out my childhood fantasy and do a Christmas lights display for village residents and anyone else who wanted to come to enjoy. Because I have an "end" unit, I have three sides of the house I could decorate and it grew from there. Each year I have had a particular style of decoration. In the first year, I had "stained-glass windows" as a major feature. Last year I decided I wanted life-sized figures in the display. This year I am concentrating on lights. Probably I will have doubled the number of lights I started with two years ago. If you know anyone about to take a space-flight, ask them to check if they can see my place as they fly over!

Have I explained why I do Christmas lights? I think you will note my past enthusiasm and perhaps the creative aspect of my nature and the desire to bring some light and hope into people's lives. I believe we have two types of Christmas festivals. One is the enjoyment of family, especially children, gift-giving, feasting, singing and so on. The other is the origin of Christmas and I try to express the joy, hope, peace and love of that first Christmas as a celebration of my own faith. May God bless you all this Christmas and throughout the New Year.

Neville Biggs.

[Sadly, because of a computer glitch, Neville's splendid photos couldn't be included here, but will be up on the noticeboard, soon. Ed.]

RECYCLING

I notice that the hand wash pump containers are disappearing. Please do not throw these out when empty. We refill them. Trying to do our little bit in reducing waste.

Thank you. Marion

MONDAY GARDENING GROUP

The St Ninian's/Benedictus Gardening Group works to create and maintain our own little Garden of Eden. It meets on the first and third Mondays of each month from 9.30 for an hour or so, and then enjoys a cuppa and a chat. There are tasks for every level of skill and fitness: pruning, weeding, collecting mulch and so on.