

December

2025



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LIVING + GROWING + SERVING + PROCLAIMING IN CHRIST

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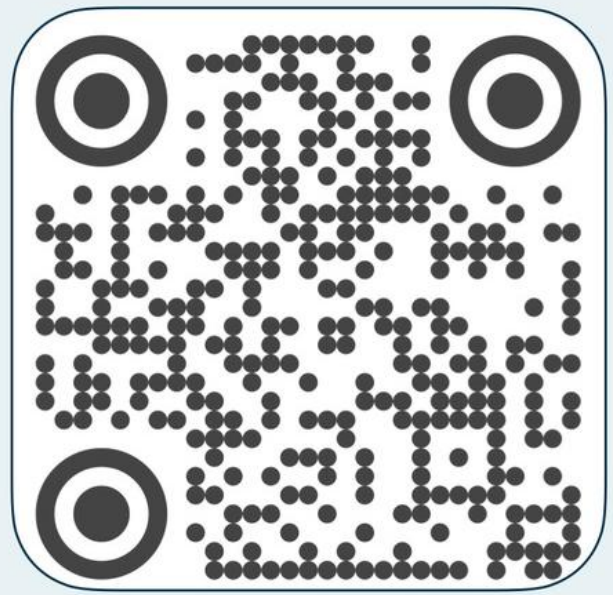
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Please scan the QR code and fill out the linked form.



Where May I Serve?



Christmas reflection



“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”

John 1:5

This Christmas, as we remember the birth of Jesus, we remember that God’s light still shines, even when life feels heavy, confusing, or uncertain. Jesus came into a very ordinary and imperfect world, and that means He is not far away from our ordinary and imperfect lives. In Him, God comes close to our joy and laughter, but also to our fear, pain, and questions.

For many people, this year has held both celebration and sadness. As a nation, we continue to think of and pray for those impacted by the recent events in Bondi, and for all who are grieving, anxious, or feeling lost. Sometimes we do not know what to say or how to make sense of these things, but Christmas tells us that God has not forgotten us or turned away. In Jesus, Emmanuel, “God with us”, He has stepped into our world and walks with us even in the darkest valleys.

The light of Christ does not ignore the darkness, but shines in it. His light invites us to bring our fears and tears to Him honestly, and to let His peace settle our hearts. It also sends us out as His people – to be gentle, to listen well, to forgive, to encourage, and to stand alongside those who are hurting. Every simple act of love, every quiet prayer, every word of kindness can be like a small candle pointing others to Jesus, the true light of the world.

As you slow down this Christmas, may you find a moment to sit with the story of the manger again. Remember that Jesus came for you, that He knows you by name, and that His hope, peace, joy, and love are for you and your family. May His presence be real to you this season and in the year ahead.



Prayer

Loving God, thank You for sending Jesus, the light of the world and Emmanuel, God with us. Be near to all who are sad, lonely, or hurting this Christmas. Bring your comfort, peace, and healing to our community, our city, and our country. Help us to trust You, to walk in Your light each day, and to share Your love with the people around us in small and practical ways.

In Jesus’ name, Amen.



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2025 Class of

As a church family, we had the joy of praying with and for our Year 12s as they went through their exams this year, and now as they receive their results. We thank God for sustaining them through the pressure and change of this season, and we celebrate their hard work and perseverance. At the same time, we remember that their worth is not measured by marks, but by the truth that they are deeply loved and known by God. As they make decisions about next steps — study, work, or other pathways — we continue to pray that the Lord will guide their feet, give them wisdom and courage, and lead them into good plans that honour Him. May they keep trusting Jesus with their future, knowing He is faithful, walking with them into whatever comes next.



**well done
&
God bless**

Meet Elsa

Young adult, singer, youth leader
parish council member at St Tom's

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Else joined St Tom's in November 2024
after moving to Melbourne for uni

A home away from home

Elsa is an international student studying a Bachelor's degree at Deakin University. She moved to Australia in July 2024 and has been part of St Tom's since November that year. She grew up in a Christian family, with a grandmother who played a big role in their local church, and has been shaped by values of integrity and inclusion. Coming to St Tom's has given her "a home away from home" – a united and inspiring community to rely on, as well as space to enjoy her favourite hobby: singing.

Elsa has helped with morning tea, regularly sings at the 10am communion service, and has recently stepped into roles as a youth leader and member of the parish council.

One of Elsa's favourite memories is this year's church retreat, where she helped set up for meals and organised games. Seeing how a little help can make the weekend special for others is something she will always cherish.

courage

Why serving matters to Elsa

Elsa believes volunteering builds real connections. It helps the church grow from just a place of worship into a community where people share life and faith together. Serving has helped her come out of her shell and feel more comfortable around others at St Tom's.

Through simple acts of service, she has seen how God uses ordinary people to encourage, welcome, and care for the church family, and how volunteering puts the gospel into practice in everyday ways.

“Volunteering helps the church become a place where people can be themselves, build strong friendships, and live out the gospel together.” – Elsa

Elsa's encouragement:

“It can seem intimidating at the beginning, especially as a newcomer, but it's such a valuable experience. The best way to start is to talk to people and find small ways you can help. Even something as simple as washing dishes after morning tea is a valuable addition to this community – it will not go unnoticed!”



Chat with one of the ministers after church.
Ask about simple one-off ways to help (morning tea, pack up, welcoming).
Email the office if you'd like to explore regular serving.

LOVE



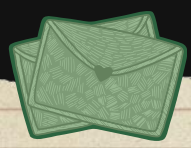
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or chosen

Christmas Carnival



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Christmas Carnival

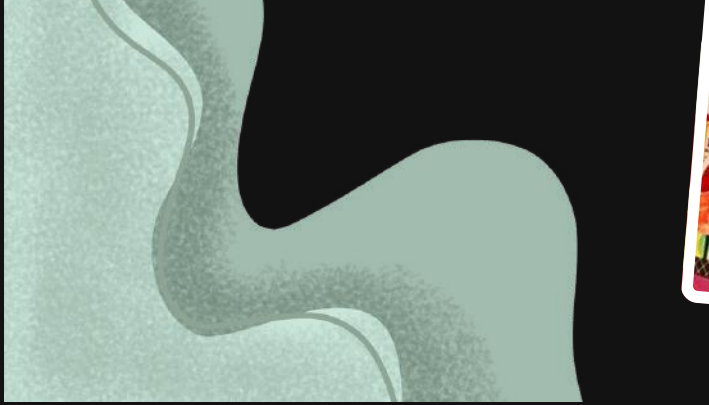


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Christmas Carnival



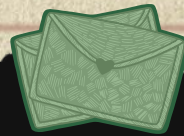


strongly believe that
the moment you decide
to attend at your chosen

Christmas Carnival

St Tom's Christmas Carnival turned our courtyard into a joyful, noisy space where children ran between games, parents chatted over food, and neighbours lingered longer than they planned. Simple things - a ring toss, face painting, a sausage in bread - became little bridges for conversation and connection, especially for those who might not usually step inside a church building.

In the middle of the fun, pausing to sing children's carols and retell the story of Jesus' birth reminded everyone why we gather at Christmas at all. The laughter, the mixed accents, and the sight of different generations serving side by side were a quiet picture of the kingdom: ordinary people, from many backgrounds, drawn together by the good news of great joy for all people.



I Still Call Australia Home.

Reflection on Mid-autumn by Joey

For every overseas Chinese, Mid-Autumn is not merely a festival; It is part of our cultural DNA. In the Confucian tradition, Mid-Autumn signifies reunion and belonging. Yet for new migrants in Melbourne, gazing at the moon of the Southern Hemisphere inevitably stirs the homesick emotions of being “a stranger in a strange land.”

At our church’s recent Mid-Autumn gathering, I witnessed more than lively celebration. I saw a deeper theological and cultural dialogue—a conversation about how we find our place, our settled identity, in a foreign land.

When I first arrived in Melbourne, I represented the Chinese congregation in planning a “Multicultural Music Concert.” That experience still moves me. A Hong Kong student was invited to sing “I Still Call Australia Home.” It was more than a performance; it was a rite of belonging: through this song, local Australians affirmed his identity as “family.” What struck me even more was their follow-up question: “Do you acknowledge us as family? Please don’t feel like a perpetual outsider—this is your home.”

This goes beyond the Western liberal philosophical notion of “tolerance.” It resonates more with the Christian theological vision of hospitality—philoxenia, the love of the stranger. In that moment, the line between host and guest blurred. We were no longer passive recipients, but invited participants in building this home together.



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This year's Mid-Autumn event, strongly supported by the church, confirmed the same truth. The church hosted this festival not merely as a utilitarian tool for evangelism, nor simply to encourage us to "feel at home," but to recognize and honor Chinese culture as an indispensable part of the church's overall cultural life.

Such embrace created a remarkable chemistry. Many attendees—especially Chinese friends who don't speak the language well and might often feel marginalized—remarked during the evening, "Church is wonderful; the warmth is immediate."

Here we see a profound "relational ethic." For learners from St. Toms Hope English classes, learning English is no longer just the acquisition of survival skills; it begins with a felt experience of being accepted. As Confucius taught, "When those who are near are delighted, those who are far will come." When a community is culturally respected and personally affirmed, learning and integration become a joy from the heart, not a coerced assimilation.

Philosophically speaking, migrants often grapple with the anxiety of a "double absence": no longer able to return to the homeland, yet never fully at home in the new land. The church's Mid-Autumn gathering offered a transcendent third space. Here, we do not have to erase the "Chinese" imprint to gain acceptance as "Australians." On the contrary, the church tells us: it is precisely your unique cultural background that enriches this family. This embrace echoes the biblical promise: "You are no longer strangers and aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

Thank you, St. Thomas Church, for providing not merely a venue, but a cultural embrace. This Mid-Autumn, we not only tasted mooncakes; we tasted belonging. It reassures us that wherever love and welcome are found, a foreign land can indeed become home.



LIVING + GROWING + SERVING + PROCLAIMING IN CHRIST



Whitehorse Churches Care is partnering with local churches to host a special Christmas lunch for Deakin students, offering a warm community space in the middle of a busy and sometimes lonely season. The lunch brings together students from many cultures and backgrounds to share a festive meal, enjoy conversation, and experience the welcome of local Christians in Whitehorse. For international students especially, being far from home at Christmas can be hard, so this lunch is a simple way of saying, "You are not alone. You are seen, valued, and part of our neighbourhood."



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Through this event, Whitehorse Churches Care and partner churches hope to reflect the heart of Christmas: God coming near to us in Jesus and inviting us to His table. Volunteers from different congregations help prepare food, serve, and sit with students, building relationships that often continue beyond the day itself. Whether students have a church background or are just curious, everyone is welcome to come, relax, and celebrate together over a generous Christmas meal.



The Whitehorse Churches Care Christmas lunch beautifully fits St Tom's mission of LIVING + GROWING + SERVING + PROCLAIMING IN CHRIST.

We live out Christ's love by offering friendship and hospitality to Deakin students, especially those far from home.

We grow as disciples as we share life with people from different cultures and backgrounds.

We serve in Christ through very practical care—cooking, hosting, listening.

And we proclaim Christ as our welcome, generosity, and words point students to the good news of Jesus.

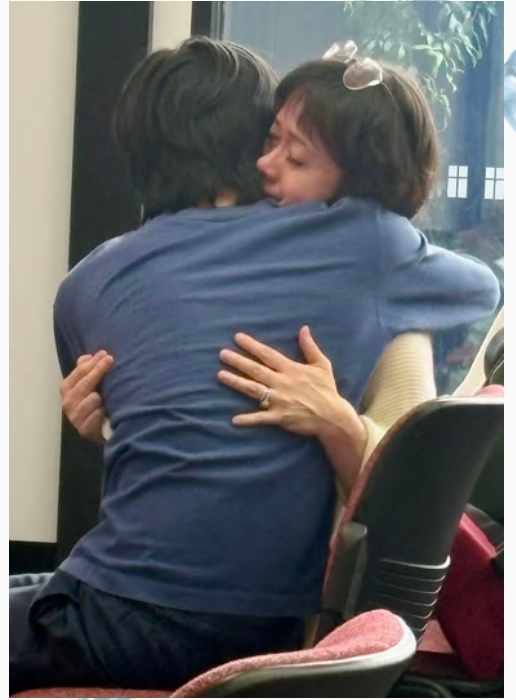


LIVING + GROWING + SERVING + PROCLAIMING IN CHRIST



for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4-5



Praise the Lord for His grace!

BAPTISM



LIVING + GROWING + SERVING + PROCLAIMING IN CHRIST

important dates for 2026

SAVE THE DATE

Introducing God

16 Feb - 30 March

Pancake Tuesday!

17 Feb

St Tom's Day + Parish Lunch

22 Feb

**Bible overview with Bishop Paul Barker
(7-9pm)**

10 March

Children and Youth Training at Ridley

14 March

Good Friday

3 April

Celebration

30 Year Anniversary of the Cantonese Congregation

23 May

Youth Camp @ Log Cabin Homestead

2 - 5 July

Women's Retreat

28 - 30 August

Thanksgiving and AGM

15 November

Christmas Carnival

6 December



We are one church with four diverse congregations that meet on Sundays and throughout the week.

Our congregations are made up of all ages.

We seek to share the good news of God's love, found in Jesus Christ, with those around us, in caring and practical ways. We'd love to welcome you into our community.



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