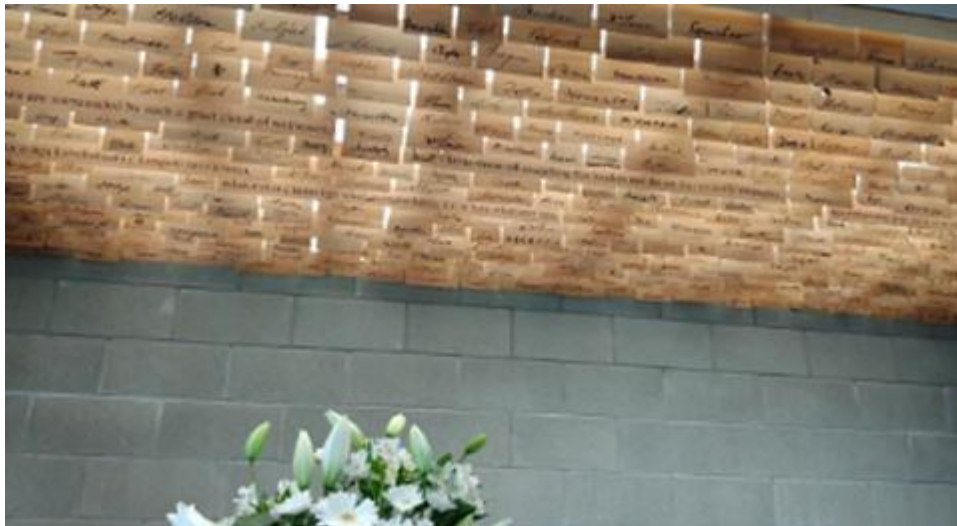




Reminder – This Saturday (22 Aug) from 9am there's a working bee and sausage sizzle at the church to prepare our gardens for the forecast El Nino. For details, check the bulletin!

Dear Friends,

This year at church we are doing something different in the lead up to Christmas – and we're starting this Sunday!

Yes, that's right! Long before the Christmas decorations are up or you've heard a single Christmas carol, we are beginning a preaching series that will run from this Sunday, 23 August, up until Christmas Day, 25 December.

This series is based on the genealogy of Jesus as laid out in Matthew 1:1-17; and we'll be looking at what the list itself says about Jesus, and what these stories of Jesus' forebears also tell us about Jesus.

As the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who (unknowingly) meet Jesus, say after he, *"beginning with Moses and all the prophets...interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures," "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scripture to us?"*

Genealogies are one of those parts of the Bible we, in contemporary Western culture, tend to disregard - in the same way that we don't commit to memory our own genealogies. I don't know about you, but after I name my grandparents, Cyril Groves and Florence Castle on my father's side, and Roy Fisher and Joyce Leal on my mother's side, things get very patchy!

But for people in traditional societies (and cultures that preserve traditional values today) genealogies held (and still hold) a very important place.

I have been reading an article about French historian Pierre Nora who spoke about traditional societies living in a *milieux de mémoire*, a memory environment where the past was (or is), *"continuously present through oral tradition, ritual practice, and unbroken chains of transmission."* Contemporary Western society, however, with its

rapid social change, urbanisation and the acceleration of history, Nora says has, “*severed the living connections that once bound communities to their pasts.*”

As people of faith, however, people “*surrounded,*” as Hebrews 12:1 says, “*by a great cloud of witnesses*” we are part of a living memory; one that is evolving constantly and continues to shape our present identity. In reviving our memories of Jesus’ forbears, then, we hope to discover not only more about Jesus, but also more about who we are, as Jesus’ people.

This series idea is not original! Earlier in the year, when I hosted the City Baptist Pastor’s Retreat here in Canberra, Elliot Rice from Wellington Central Baptist Church in New Zealand, mentioned he had preached a series like this last year. Being from New Zealand, where Māori culture has a rich tradition of remembering the ancestors, he called it the “*Whakapapa of Jesus*’. *Whakapapa* refers to genealogy, but literally it means to ‘place in layers’ or ‘create a foundation’. Not only do genealogies form a living memory or cloud of witnesses, but they form a foundation for our current living. *(The picture above comes from the ‘whakapapa’ of names of people of faith that Christchurch Baptist Church in New Zealand has hanging from their ceiling above the baptistry. It is a beautiful image of that great cloud of witnesses!)*

Here’s a preview of our Call to Worship for Sunday!

We are met in the presence of God **And we do not meet alone.**
With the angels in the highest heaven **We gather to worship the Lord.**
With Abraham and Sarah **We gather to worship the Lord.**
With the saints of every age **We gather to worship the Lord.**
We embark on our own journey of faith **God’s Holy name be praised.**
God makes of us a great people **God’s Holy name be praised.**
In the bush and city, in every sphere of life **God’s Holy name be praised.**
We journey in the presence of God **And we do not journey alone.**

Grace and peace,

Belinda