

*Friendship is a vehicle for the gospel in the sense that it's cross-shaped: formed for life laid down in love for others, just as Jesus laid down his own life for us.*

Mission is the “throbbing heart” of Christian friendship—McLaughlin’s strongest and most confronting argument. Our closest friendships, she says, should be gospel-spreading partnerships. It’s what distinguishes them from our wider, secular friendships. Mission is everyday living. It’s going into our jobs, schools, universities, and communities, and showcasing Christ through how we act, speak and love. Even in these mundane interactions, soldiers can be belittled, wounded, demoralised, and even lost. Battle-hardened Christian friends, however, spur each other on and bind each other’s wounds.

McLaughlin has no time for “inner rings” or “cliques” that form in our churches. There’s a place for hanging out with people we naturally like, she argues, but speaking to the same people shrinks your witness and care towards others. You become inward-looking, rather than outward. And that breaks Jesus’s clear command: “Love each other as I have loved you” (Jn 15:12).

Instead, it means actively seeking people on the fringes of church: believers who scurry out the door before the last song finishes, the broken, or those who no one talks to. Stop asking “Who will love me?” and instead ask, “Who can I love?”.

Likewise, she also calls on people who see Christian friendship as an optional extra—believers who deliberately avoid investing in others. Genuine friendship fuels, revives, delights, and grows us because it is an echo of Jesus’s greater love for us. As a body of believers, we can only do the work of God if we reach out to others and include them. We all have different levels of capacity and need, so we need to draw on the strength of others. To think we’re self-sufficient is the sin of pride.

Only Jesus can meet everybody’s needs, she reminds us. But if we link together, we have the resources to carry each other’s burdens (Gal 6:2), thanks to the strength God gives us collectively. McLaughlin doesn’t wag her finger. She has a heartfelt desire for Christ’s love and joy to be shared among *all* of his people and Christians to grow deeper in faith together.

Knowing everyone is made in the image of God, paired with the reality that the lonely, outcasts and those completely unlike us will be worshipping Jesus beside us in the New Creation, is a powerful motivation for investing in friendships *now*. Ultimately, *No Greater Love* is a brutally honest, heartfelt and overdue call for Christians seeking more than milk-and-two-sugar friendships. It’s cutting, but wounds from a friend can indeed be trusted (Proverbs 27:6).

Collect

Almighty God, your blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things: mercifully give us faith to trust that, as he promised, he abides with us on earth until the end of time; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**



St Luke’s Anglican Church Emerald

Cnr Ruby & Theresa St.

Phone – 4982 1802

Email – [emerald@anglicanchurchcq.org.au](mailto:emerald@anglicanchurchcq.org.au)

Website – [stlukesemerald.org.au](http://stlukesemerald.org.au)

*Jesus prayed, ‘Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one [ John 17:11]*

**Easter 7 (12<sup>th</sup> May)**

Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Psalm 1

1 John 5:9-13

**John 17:6-19**

**Pentecost (19<sup>th</sup> May)**

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:26-36

Romans 8:22-27

**John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15**

**Fighting Loneliness One Friend at a Time**

"No Greater Love" by Rebecca McLaughlin  
TGCA 28/02/2024 **SCOTT MONK**

It’s ironic to read a new book about friendship and end up feeling lonely. Not lonely in the sense of being friendless, but spiritually lonely at church most Sunday mornings. I rarely find conversations lasting longer than five minutes. Most never mention the sermon. Everyone seems “good” but “busy”. Before long, you’re out the front door, pining for something more ... Depth. Accountability. Honesty. Purpose.

Why is this happening? British-American writer Rebecca McLaughlin’s piercing new book, *No Greater Love*, gives a brutal yet honest assessment: too many Christian friendships are self-serving, rather than Christ-serving. We forget that Jesus didn’t draw his 12 disciples to himself to form a book club or footy team. Genuine Christian friendships are formed by marching side-by-side through the spiritual battles we all face. Churches aren’t social clubs, but war rooms:

*We are not called to foster friendships for their own sake. Rather, Christian friendships are designed to help us fight. Fellow soldiers come alongside each other in the battle. They spur each other on and have each other’s backs, and we will need our fellow soldiers in the Lord as we resist an enemy who is far beyond our strength.*

McLaughlin’s criticism is a gut punch for several reasons. First, it’s countercultural. Second, it challenges church culture. No more superficial conversations. No more friendship bubbles. We must actively befriend people unlike us and invite them into our lives. Third, it requires long-term commitment. And fourth, and most importantly, it correctly puts Jesus and the gospel at the centre of every Christian friendship.

Paul’s letters to Timothy, for example, aren’t postcards from Rome. They’re encouraging the younger leader to suffer like a good soldier of Jesus Christ .

## A guide for our prayers during the week

### Monday

Our diocese and the gospel

- Bishop Peter
- Other parishes
- Dean for Cathedral – Rev. Ross Nicholson

### Tuesday

Our church and the gospel

- Children and youth
- Families
- Seniors
- Ivy, Chris

### Wednesday

Our community and the gospel

- St Luke's Op Shop
- Blackwater
- Emerald Churches

### Thursday

Our nation and the gospel

- Prime minister
- State and local government
- Religious Freedom legislation

### Friday

God's world and the gospel

- Islamisation
- War and poverty
- Persecuted Church
- CMS and ABM

### Saturday

Ministry and the gospel

- Bible Studies
- Food for Body and Soul
- Wardens and Parish Council

### Dates to Remember

Today	Service at 4 pm
9 May	Bible study (Full of Promise)
19 May	Commissioning Sunday
25 May	Lay Preacher training Springsure 1-5 pm
26-29 May	Clergy Conference

	12 May	19 May
<b>Service Leader</b>	Russell	Dianne
<b>Read</b>		Merv
<b>Prayers</b>	Dianne	Nancy
<b>Shop</b>	Kaylene, Wayne, Jenni	Nancy, Theresa
<b>Grounds</b>		Phil

### The BCA Prayer

Lord our God, help us to remember those who live in isolated and remote parts of our land. We ask you to strengthen and encourage all whose ministries are supported by The Bush Church Aid Society.

Refresh them in times of discouragement and loneliness and call others to stand with them in the task of making Christ known.

Grant that, through the ministry of the Word and Sacraments, through caring service and by support for young people, the message of your redeeming love may be proclaimed and accepted by the people of our land. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

### Direct Debit Giving Information

**Account name:** St Luke's Anglican Church

**BSB:** 034-181

**Account No.:** 810 226

**Description:** 'Giving'