



**THE  
TOXIC  
CHURCH**

**Bible Study  
Term 2 2018  
1 Corinthians 1-7**

## BIBLE STUDY PROGRAM – TERM 2 2018

Week commencing		Reading Plan	Page Number
<i>7th May</i>	<b>1. The toxic church Favours human wisdom over the cross</b>	1 Corinthians 1-18-2:5	6
<i>14th May</i>	<b>2. The toxic church Neglects the power of the Spirit</b>	1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4	9
<i>21st May</i>	<b>3. The toxic church Despises servant leadership</b>	1 Corinthians 3:5-23	12
<i>28th May</i>	<b>4. The toxic church Endorses flashy leaders</b>	1 Corinthians 4:1-17	15
<i>4th June</i>	<b>5. The toxic church Overlooks sexual looseness</b>	1 Corinthians 4:18-5:13, 6:12-20	18
<i>11th June</i>	<b>6. The toxic church Craves self-seeking greed</b>	1 Corinthians 6:1-11	21
<i>18th June</i>	<b>7. The toxic church Undervalues marriage</b>	1 Corinthians 7:1-16	25
<i>25th June</i>	<b>8. The toxic church Undervalues singleness</b>	1 Corinthians 7:17-40	28

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Cover Design by Guy Smith  
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St Luke's Anglican Church, Miranda

ST LUKE'S  
**2020**  
**VISION**

**Imagine a church:**

Where delight in God  
overflows into all of life

Where enduring truth  
inspires courageous witness  
and a heart for the nations

Where the lost surrender  
to the mercy of Christ

Where a hunger to  
know, love & serve Christ  
renews every season

Where the broken find  
a family and the outsider  
is embraced

# The Toxic Church

## 1 Corinthians 1-7

I wonder if you've ever heard someone say, "I wish we could go back to just how it was in the early church!" Imagine hearing Peter preach on the day of Pentecost, seeing Paul raise a young man back to life, and witnessing many put their faith in Jesus for the first time. But all was not perfect and worthy of imitation. Indeed, I expect Paul might have replied to such a longing, "have you met the Corinthian Christians?!"

### Corinth

Corinth was a major city in the ancient Mediterranean world. Ideally located on a narrow piece of land between Peloponnesus and mainland Greece, it was known as "the master of two harbors."



Brian Rosner and Roy Ciampa write, "Roman Corinth was prosperous, cosmopolitan, and religiously pluralistic, accustomed to visits by impressive, travelling speakers and obsessed with status, self-promotion, and personal rights."<sup>1</sup> Corinth became famous for luxury and immorality. It boasted a temple to Aphrodite, which had 1000 priestess-prostitutes. To "Corinthianise" became a saying for the profligate life.

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<sup>1</sup> Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2010

## The church in Corinth

In Acts 18 we read about the beginnings of the church in Corinth. With Priscilla and Aquila, Paul reportedly spent a year and a half ministering to this new community.

But two or three years after leaving this church, he is forced to respond to disturbing reports. It seems that the Corinthians boasted about being very “spiritual”, though sought it in all the wrong places. They had become captivated by wisdom, knowledge and power,<sup>2</sup> and looked down on Paul’s ministry and the message of the cross.

Corinthian buzzwords	
<b>Spiritual</b>	2:13, 14, 15; 3:1; 9:11; 10:3-4; 12:1; 14:1; 12:1; 14:1, 37; 15:44, 46
<b>Wisdom</b>	1:17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 24, 30; 2:1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 13; 3:19; 12:8
<b>Knowledge</b>	1:5; 8:1, 7, 10, 11; 12:8; 13:2, 8; 14:6
<b>Power</b>	1:18, 24; 2:4-5; 4:19, 20; 5:4; 6:14; 12:20; 15:24, 46, 56

Furthermore, the Corinthians had adopted much of moral licentiousness of the surrounding culture. They were sexually loose, obsessed with wealth, status, and treated fellow Christians terribly. In fact, at one point in his letter, Paul notes such was the immorality of the Corinthians that it surpassed those outside the church.

## Corinth and us

Before coming to Miranda, a minister in Sydney described St Luke’s to me as “the healthiest Anglican Church in Sydney.” After a year, I can see what they meant; it’s an exceptionally happy and healthy community. As Archbishop Glenn Davies wrote, “*For the past century St Luke’s Miranda has been privileged to experience a wealth of talented people, both lay and clergy, who have stood firmly for the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and sought to reach out to their community with love.*”<sup>3</sup>

But we live in a city much like Corinth. It is just as prosperous, cosmopolitan, religiously pluralistic, obsessed with status, self-promotion and personal rights. Where sadly churches can become just as toxic due to factions and disunity, while permitting godlessness of the surrounding culture. Paul’s letter ought to be just as much a warning to us. It urges us to learn from the errors of the Corinthians, while holding fast to the message of the cross of Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> Used with permission Vaughan Roberts *True Spirituality*, Inter-varsity Press: Norton Street, Nottingham, 2011

<sup>3</sup> St Luke’s Miranda: Centenary 1899-1999, St Luke’s Anglican Church: Miranda, 1999

**Study 1 – The Toxic Church**  
*Favours human wisdom over the cross*  
*1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5*

Share a time when you were called a fool? Have you ever been labeled foolish for being a Christian?

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**

1) Make a list of words Paul repeats numerous times in the passage. Write a definition next to each. What is Paul most concerned about?

2) Why was the message of the cross thought of as foolish in Corinth? What had the Corinthians become obsessed with? (vv 20-25)

3) According to Paul, what are the limitations of human wisdom? What is powerful about the cross? (vv 22-25)

4) Why don't the Corinthians have a reason to be proud? How are they to boast? (vv 26-31)

5) What are the signs and wisdom people seek today? How should we respond to such requests?

6) How could you encourage someone who has just been told they're are silly and foolish for following Jesus?

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

7) What did it mean for Paul "to know nothing... except Jesus Christ and him crucified?" What will this same attitude mean for us today:

a) As a church?

b) At home?

c) In our places of study, workplaces, and friendship groups?

8) Do you think there is a place for philosophical debate and clever argument in sharing the gospel? Why or why not?

9) Paul openly speaks of his frailty and limitations, but also how God has worked powerfully in his weakness. Share how you have seen God work powerfully in your weakness.

10) Share with the group the name of someone with whom you would like to talk about Jesus. Spend some time praying for these people and for each other as you share the message of the cross.

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## **Weekly Prayer Points**

### **Staff**

Pray for Stephen and Susie, Ben, and Tim Gibson. Pray for Stephen as he heads up our Maturity profile for St Luke's, and mentors and leads staff.

### **Missionaries**

Pray for Matt and Lauren, Ezra and Joanna Thomas and their mission work with OMF in South East Asia.

### **Community**

Pray for our Church Wardens: Colin Adams, Jack Normand and Joel Garlato. Pray for our Parish Councillors: Laurie Davidson, Amanda Garlato, Angela James, Nathan Pollock, Simon Veltmeyer (also our treasurer) and Kath Telfer. Pray for our Parish Nominators: Michael Easton, David Francis, Amanda Garlato, Louise Parkes, and Lloyd Zietsch. Pray for our Synod Reps: Michael Easton and Amanda Garlato.

### **Local Mission**

Pray for the wide range of outreach opportunities that we have with local schools. That our scripture teachers would be diligent and loving as they teach classes, that our school chaplains would effectively model Christ in the way they love and support the school community and that St. Luke's Miranda North would continue to build a healthy relationship with the school we meet in.

Pray for the breakfast club at Miranda Public and Port Hacking High School.

### **Coming Events**

Men's Retreat: 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> May at Youthworks site, Port Hacking.

Speaker: Tim Goldsmith



**Study 2 – The Toxic Church**  
*Neglects the power of the Spirit*  
*1 Corinthians 2:6-3:4*

Describe the most “spiritual” person you know. What do they do? What don’t they do?

**Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16**

1) In chapters 1-2, Paul refers to two types of wisdom. Summarise them both and their outcomes.

2) What is the secret wisdom that Paul speaks about in verse 7? How has it been revealed?

3) Who do you think Paul was referring to when he speaks of the “rulers of this age”? Who are they today?

4) What three things does the Holy Spirit do? (vv.10-13) Try to put it in your own words.

5) How can we neglect the power of the Spirit in the following areas of our lives:

a) In our quiet times?

b) At church?

c) As we tell others about Jesus?

6) How does it comfort you to know “we have the mind of Christ”?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4**

7) The Corinthian Christians thought they were spiritually elite. What image does Paul use to describe them in verse 1? How is this supposed to make them feel?

8) Why was Paul calling them childish? How can we act in the same way?

9) What is the spiritual food Paul is speaking about? What is the diet for a Christian to grow?

10) Having looked at this passage, how would you *now* describe a truly spiritual person?

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## Weekly Prayer Points

### Staff

Pray for Jennie and Don Everist. Pray for Jennie as Focus Pastor of the 8am congregation and as Pastoral Care Minister for St Luke's. Pray for Jennie's Pastoral Care ministries, especially in her work in visitation and Bible Study in our local retirement villages.

### Missionaries

Pray for Shane and Ruth, Kye, Joel, and Finn Sparks and their mission work with Pioneers in Gijon, Spain.

### Community

Pray for our Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and his government. Pray for our local and state members, Eleni Petinos, Mark Speakman and Scott Morrison. Pray for our Premier, Gladys Berejiklian. Pray for our Mayor, Carmelo Pesce.

### Local Mission

Pray that the word of God taught on Sunday, might shape how we live Monday to Friday. Pray that we would be respectful of workplace boundaries, but that we'd also *"be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have"* (1 Peter 3:15). Thank God that we have the opportunity to represent Christ in how we speak and act in the workplace.

## Study 3 – The Toxic Church

### *Despises servant leadership*

### *1 Corinthians 3:5-23*

Rank the following qualities of a Christian leader in order from most important to least important (i.e. number 1-10)

Good work ethic		Demonstrates healthy leadership	
Models evangelism		Does not yield to critics	
Effective preaching		Love of congregation	
Joyous		Casts a vision	
Strong character		Transparent	

#### Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

1) What is the main issue Paul has been writing about so far in his letter to the Corinthians? (Cf. 1:10-12; 3:4)

2) Who was Apollos? (Read Acts 18:24-28) How did he serve the church?

3) In verse 5-8, Paul describes God's people at Corinth as a growing garden.

- What was Apollos' role?
- What was Paul's role?
- What is God's role?

4) What are some destructive attitudes we can hold about ministers? What are some constructive attitudes we should have?

5) If it is God who gives the growth, how should we think about our own ministries?

**Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-18**

6) In verses 10-15, Paul describes God's people at Corinth as a building and a temple.

- What was Paul's role?
- What was the role of others?
- What is the foundation?

7) What two types of building materials does Paul speak about? Thinking about what you have already read in 1 Corinthians, what do these types of materials represent?

8) How does it make you feel that your labour will be shown for what it is? How can we ensure that we build things that last at St Luke's?

## Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

9) Summarise Paul's logic in verses 18-20 about wisdom. How ought this challenge the way the Corinthians think about their leaders? How should it challenge us?

10) Why is it often tempting to boast in what you have achieved? Why doesn't Paul? What can we learn from him?

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## Weekly Prayer Points

### Staff

Pray for Brett and Mardi, Evie, Harriet, Olivia, and Willow Middleton. Pray for Brett as Focus Pastor for 10am. Pray for Brett as he heads up our Ministry profile for St Luke's through the training program MTS.

### Missionaries

Pray for Pastor John and Jodi, Gemma, Amber, Zoe, Jasmine, Claudia and Elias Lovell and their work with CMS in the Spanish Reformed Episcopal Church in Valencia, Spain.

### Community

Pray for those who serve to protect our country. Pray for health and safety for the service men and women and their Chaplains both here and overseas. Pray for their families waiting at home.

### Local Mission

Thank God for the many and varied resources available to us as a parish. As we seek to witness to the goodness of God daily, pray that we might make the most of opportunities to invite people we know to events such as Sticky Date and Stories. Pray that God would be preparing the heart of people you could invite to an upcoming event.

## Study 4 – The Toxic Church

*Endorses flashy leaders*

*1 Corinthians 4:1-17*

According to research there are over 10,000 ministers across all church denominations in Australia that have left full-time ministry. What reasons do you think might be factors?

**Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-7**

1) How does Paul describe himself and Apollos? What characteristic does he identify as most important? (vv 1-2)

2) To whom is Paul accountable? Who is he not? (vv 3-5)

3) It is possible that the Corinthians were judging Paul because his preaching was plain and focused on the cross. In what sense should Christian leaders not worry about how people judge them? Can they ignore every criticism?

4) What humbling words does Paul have for the Corinthian leaders about their own abilities? (vv 6-7) How should they humble us too?

## Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-13

5) Does Paul really think that these Christians are “rich”, “kings” and “wise”? What point is Paul making? (vv 8-10)

6) How can we get caught in the same trap as the Corinthians of thinking we have already made it?

7) How did Paul view himself and Christian ministry? (vv 10-13)

8) Do you struggle with “being at the end of the procession” and “a spectacle for the whole universe”? How do you need to re-think that based on this passage?



## Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

9) What is the solution that Paul has for getting back on track?

10) Who are some people who have been examples for you in Christ? How can we nurture a culture of leaders at St Luke's who are known for their faithfulness not their flashiness?

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### Weekly Prayer Points

#### Staff

Pray for Student Minister Zack Hankin and his work at Miranda North.

Pray for Russ Denten as Focus Pastor for JNR Church and undergoes his ministry traineeship; that his ministry and studies would bring glory to God.

#### Missionaries

Pray for John-Francis and Anup Wallace and their mission work in Indore, North India.

#### Community

Pray for peace and wise leadership in our world, specifically in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Sudan and South Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Mexico, Libya, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the Ukraine. Pray that there would be opportunities for Christians to share the love, peace and saving grace that Jesus offers to all.

**Study 5 – The Toxic Church**  
*Overlooks sexual looseness*  
*1 Corinthians 4:18-5:13, 6:12-20*

In many cultures, what consenting adults do is a private matter and no one else's business. What do you think a Christian attitude should be to such an approach?

**Read 1 Corinthians 4:18-5:5**

1) Why is the situation in verse 5:1 so serious?

2) According to Paul how should the Corinthians deal with people within the church who won't repent of their sins? Why? (vv 2-5)

3) Handing someone over to Satan sounds both severe and spooky. But what does Paul actually hope will happen?

4) If you knew of a situation of serious sexual immorality, what steps could you take to obey Paul's instructions?

### Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-13

5) What are the two arguments Paul makes about bread and yeast? How do they support the case for expelling an immoral brother or sister? (vv 6-8)

6) Paul calls on the Corinthian church to exercise discerning judgment. Who is and is not to be judged? Why? (vv 9-13)

7) Practically, in the case of sexual immorality, what could it look like at St Luke's for a little yeast to work through the whole batch of dough:

- Amongst your friends?
- In your Bible study?
- In your congregation?
- Through out St Luke's as a whole?

### Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

8) What false views does Paul counter? (vv 12-13)

9) What do we learn about a Christian view of the body? (vv.13-17)

10) What does it mean in practice to:

- 'flee from sexual immorality' (v.18)
- 'honour God with your body' (v.20)

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## **Weekly Prayer Points**

### **Staff**

Pray for Tim and Shona, Annika, Hamish, Edward and Hugo Goldsmith. Pray for Tim as he leads Miranda North and Church at 5. Pray for Tim as he heads up our Local Mission profile for St Luke's and focuses on outreach and evangelism.

### **Missionaries**

Pray for Sarah Prabhakar and her work in India with BCTI and SIM.

### **Community**

Pray for our ongoing and various Children's, Youth, and Young Adults Ministries; that God would be using the leaders and volunteers to sow seeds and help people grow into mature and loving relationships with Jesus and that this would be a great witness to the wider community.

### **Local Mission**

Thank God for his loving provision in drawing us to him and making us his children and heirs. Pray for members of your family and those close to you who do not know Jesus and Lord and Saviour. Pray for both wisdom and boldness in how to share the good news we have with those who are nearest and dearest to us.

## Study 6 – The Toxic Church *Craves self-seeking greed* *1 Corinthians 6:1-11*



Who do you think has “little imagination,” Calvin or Hobbes? Why?

### Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8

1) What do you think was happening in Corinth to warrant legal cases against one another? (vv 1-8)

2) Read these following quotes<sup>4</sup>:

Cicero “... the courts will never convict any man, however guilty, if only he has money.”  
Petronius “Of what avail are laws to be where money rules alone, and the poor suitor can never succeed?”

Dio Chrysostom- in Corinth there were “lawyers innumerable perverting justice”

How did the law courts operate in Corinth? Why wouldn't this be a good place for Christians to settle disputes?

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<sup>4</sup> Quotes in David. Garland *1 Corinthians*, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, Michigan (2003)

3) What does it mean that the church will judge the world? (v 2)

4) Is Paul saying Christians should never take others to court? How does Paul want Christians in this church to sort out their problems?

5) How do you think Christians hurt other Christians in the same way in this day and age?

6) How are we encouraged to respond when other Christians mistreat us?

## Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

7) How would you summarise:

- a) The warning of verses 9-10?
  
- b) The encouragement of verse 11?

8) Why is the cross of Christ central to Christian community and overcoming disunity?

9) “The point is, ladies and gentleman, that greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right, greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit. Greed, in all of its forms; greed for life, for money, for love, knowledge has marked the upward surge of mankind.” - Gordon Gecko –

How can we be countercultural in a society that is hardwired towards greed?

10) How might this passage help us view the things we own?

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## Weekly Prayer Points

### Staff

Pray for Sam and Jess, Percy and Lois Morton. Pray for Sam as Focus Pastor of Night Church. Pray for Sam as he heads up Youth Ministry at St Luke's – coordinating our youth groups on Friday nights and high school Scripture in our local schools. Pray for Sam as he also heads up Young Adults ministry and Young Adults Bible Studies.

### Missionaries

Pray for Andrew and Adele, Isaac, Lucy, and Finn Southerton and their church plant in Wellington, New Zealand. Continue to pray for Isaac's health.

Pray for Geoff and Liz, Johanna, Will, Tom and Zoe Robson and their work with TSCF (Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship) in Canterbury University, Christchurch, New Zealand.

### Community

Pray for English as a Second Language classes each Friday. Give thanks for Marina and her team as they teach and encourage those who come along.

Pray for Miranda North; that there would be many opportunities to connect with the local community through school and other activities.



## Study 7 – The Toxic Church Undervalues marriage 1 Corinthians 7:1-16

What are our society's attitudes towards the following things?

- marriage
- singleness
- sex

**Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7**

1) Assuming the words "it is good for a man not to marry" are from the Corinthians, does Paul agree or disagree with them? (v 1)

2) Why does Paul consider marriage will help Christians to be godly? What does this show about human sexuality? (v 2)

3) What are Paul's instructions to husbands and wives? (vv 3-5)

4) Paul is sometimes portrayed in a negative light in his attitudes to women. Yet in verses 2-4, he presents three statements equally and reciprocally from both a husband's and wife's perspective:

a) What does this show about Paul's attitude towards men and women in marriage?

b) How does this differ from the prevailing attitudes of our day?

5) Paul considers that a mutually agreed time of prayer is a sufficient reason for a married couple to refrain sexually. Are there other reasons that could be added to this list? Why/why not?

6) How would you respond to someone who said that sex is a private matter and shouldn't be talked about with others at church?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 7:8-16**

7) What are Paul's instructions to each of the following various groups:

- the unmarried and widows? (vv 8-9)
- those who are married to believers? (vv 10-11)
- those who are married to unbelievers? (vv 12-16)

8) Why does Paul think that a believer married to an unbeliever (who is willing to live with them) is bound to remain in the marriage?

9) Explain what Paul means about an unbelieving husband or wife being sanctified, meaning that their children are made holy too.

10) How does this passage speak to those among us who are:

- unmarried
- Widows
- married to a believer and finding marriage difficult
- married to an unbeliever and finding marriage difficult

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## Weekly Prayer Points

### Staff

Pray for Sarah Evans as she looks after music at St Lukes.

Pray for Music Student Minister James Peters and his work at Miranda North.

Pray for Emma and Stephanie as they work alongside Cam while doing Year 13.

### Missionaries

Pray for Rob and Jo, Lili, and Jemma Copland and their work with AFES (Australian Fellowship of Evangelical Students) in Wollongong University's ECU (Evangelical Christian Union), Sydney.

Pray for David, Kathryn and Reuben Luis and their work with AEFS at the Geelong Campuses of Monash University.

### Community

Pray for our Scripture Teachers, Kids Hope Mentors, and the School Lunch program leaders as they go into the schools in our Parish in outreach to children and youth.

### Local Mission

Pray for the everyday outreach that the church has through ministries such as baptisms, weddings and funerals. For those who are involved and for those who attend who don't yet know Jesus as Lord. Pray that the staff would be wise in their presentation of the gospel, that they would be thoughtful in their interactions with people and that they would be eager to make the most of every opportunity to speak of Christ the King.

## Study 8 – The Toxic Church

### *Undervalues singleness*

#### *1 Corinthians 7:17-40*

Discuss: Do you think it is better to remain single or be married? Why?

#### Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

1) What commands or advice does Paul give to the various groups in chapter 7? What reasons (if any) does he give for the command/advice?

Command/Advice	Reasons given
Married people (3-5, 10-17, 39)	
Single people (8,9, 32-35)	
Separated people (10-11)	
Widows (8,9,32-25, 39,40)	
Circumcised (18-20)	
Uncircumcised (18-20)	
Slaves (20-24)	
Engaged people / “virgins” (25,26, 36-38)	

2) Why do you think Paul says people should “remain as they are”? (7:24, 26; 27-31)

3) How does society view those who are single and not in a sexual relationship?

4) How should the fact that “the time is short” and “the world is passing away” change one’s attitude to singleness? (vv 29-30)

5) What advantage does a single person have when it comes to serving the Lord? (vv 32-35)

6) What do these verses teach those considering marriage? Should a believer ever marry a non-believer (vv 36-40)? Why/why not?

7) In what unhelpful ways does the church sometimes treat single people?

8) How as a married person can you be caring to those single at church? How as a single person can you be caring for married couples and families?

9) How would you encourage someone who currently feels deeply discontented in his or her singleness?

10) In your current situation, what encouragement or challenges are there for you in 1 Corinthians 7?

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## Weekly Prayer Points

### Staff

Pray for Cam and Katrina Harte. Pray for Cam as he heads up Children's Ministry, including KOS (Kids on Sunday), Primary Scripture, Alive (lunch-time Christian group at Miranda North Public School), Homework Club, Children's Thursday night programs, and Kids' Clubs.

Pray for Sharyn and Lisa as they deal with the day to day running and administration of St Luke's.

### Missionaries

Pray for Kylie Zietsch and her work at Johannesburg Bible College, South Africa.

Pray for Elisha and Eleanor Bililiza and their church, Holy Trinity Church, in Bukoba, Tanzania.

### Community

Praise God for our Bible Study leaders and for their faithful work in teaching and ministering to us throughout the term.

### Coming Events

TGE youth camp: 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> July at Youthworks site, Port Hacking

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