

HOPE

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AUSTRALIA

February – March 2026 NEWSLETTER

Community Dinners with Love

Peggy and her team of volunteers from the Melbourne Church of Christ serve monthly dinners for the community at a neighbourhood house in Reservoir, West Melbourne. In addition to serving food and drink, volunteers provide entertainment. Susan sings and plays the piano and Dennis plays his guitar. Volunteers also sit and eat together with the community- sharing stories and getting to know each other over a meal. Joshua, a regular volunteer, serves in his wheelchair – he serves with genuine joy and compassion despite being paralysed from the waist down and dealing with chronic nerve pain.



Volunteers serving dinner. Front row right to left: Peggy (main organiser), Susan (singer and piano player), Joshua (most encouraging volunteer), Jo (HOPE rep)

The community attending the neighbourhood house meals in Reservoir are a diverse group; some from a low socio-economic background, some with significant health issues and from different ethnic backgrounds, including Malay, Japanese and Lebanese. One family who attended: parents with their 4 daughters – with ages ranging from 6 months to 7 years old. This family came along for the meal due to pressures from the high cost of living. The father works in IT and the family struggles to keep within their limited budget, so the mother looks up community events for the family to attend, and this helps them stay on track financially. The mother said: ‘I stumbled on the ‘Food with Love’ event and was glad that the girls could enjoy a Christmas family meal with the community at Christmas, something we couldn’t afford!’

A memorable Christmas Dinner

Peggy was unsure if volunteers would sacrifice their Christmas Eve to serve a community dinner. She was pleasantly surprised and shares her experience below:



Christmas Eve's Community Dinner went far beyond anything I could have imagined. The room was filled with many new faces, gentle conversations, and the comforting sounds of Christmas songs playing in the background as dinner was served.

We shared a traditional Christmas roast with all the trimmings, nourishing 72 people who dined in and prepared 15 family takeaway meals for those who needed them. The volunteers made sure every plate was served with care, dignity, and love.

It was a busy time with 'all hands-on deck' from set up to clean up. 16 incredible volunteers gave their time, energy, and hearts prepping food, serving, entertaining, and cleaning- making it a memorable night. The atmosphere was one of warmth and togetherness. The attendees had a gratitude that was deeply heart-warming. People from all walks of life gathered for a Christmas meal and a chance to celebrate and connect.

This night was a beautiful reminder that no one should feel alone, particularly at Christmas. I was very encouraged to be part of this event and realise that it would not have happened without the incredible support, kindness, and generosity of the volunteers! Thank you for showing up, for caring, and for making this Christmas Eve, one filled with love, warmth, and human kindness!



Left: extra tables set up to cater for higher numbers than expected, Right: volunteers preparing food



Community meals are sponsored by HOPE worldwide Australia and the Melbourne Church of Christ

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