

# BANYULE BABBLE

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ANGLICAN PARISH OF BANYULE  
ST JOHN'S HEIDELBERG ❄️ HOLY SPIRIT WATSONIA

JANUARY  
2024

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## DENISE'S DATELINE

*Our Loving God, we pray that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.' Amen. (adapted from Philippians 1:9–10)*

WHAT is YOUR prayer for 2024?

Some of us look to the start of a new year as an opportunity to begin a new regime or turn a page in some aspects of our lives. Each year certainly brings changes to us all – in our age, our health and fitness, the lives of our extended families and friends; and we often say that we 'pray for a better year ahead'.

Yet each new day is a fresh start a gift from our God: we need not wait for the end of the year or week to start afresh in the way we want to go. In my YEARS of experience with dieting (a total waste of time and emotional energy anyway), waiting for a new week or month or year can spell DISASTER and BAD choices for the day that I am experiencing!

Consider the prayer above: wouldn't this be a great prayer for US to pray for 2024 – and not just at the start of the year, but each day that God gives us on this good earth?!

When I arrived at Banyule Parish on 1 Feb 2018, I was struck by the motto GROWING IN THE LOVE OF JESUS...it still holds true, doesn't it? We want to be people of God who keep on growing through Jesus and for Jesus. So, how will YOU grow in love in 2024?

We can begin by praying each day that we would grow in love – use the prayer above – and that we would obey the greatest commandment of all: **'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'** This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: **'Love your neighbour as yourself.'** (Matthew 22:37–39).

So, as well as coming to Church each **week**, how about reading the Scriptures **daily**, saying the Lord's Prayer and the Prayer from Philippians 1. Also, there is a **weekly** Bible study at Watsonia on Tuesdays of Term time (2:00–3:30 pm). All these things help us to grow in love and knowledge.

I also take this opportunity to thank Jonathan and Sarah for their love and service to our Parish in 2022/23 and 2023 respectively – we wish you all God's blessings for your future ministries.

I thank you all for your love shown to me over the last six years, and especially the last six months of this year: your love and support has been so appreciated. Love to you all for 2024, and I'm praying that we keep growing in love.

Your sister in Christ,

Denise



## J IS FOR JESUS

by Jonathan Lopez

I've used many titles stating with J (Joy, Jackfruit, Jireh) and it was kind of my secret plan to have the last one about Jesus.

Where do I begin? Our four gospels give us different beginnings: Matthew—the genealogy of Jesus, Mark—John the Baptist preparing the way, Luke—eyewitness account of servants of the word, and John—the Word made flesh. I wonder which gospel account has struck you?

I personally have been struck by Luke's account as it is a two-part account: Jesus, and the early church (Acts). I have mentioned in previous sermons that the gospel of Luke was an area of study I wanted to go deeper in whilst studying at Ridley, because it has more parables than the other gospel accounts.

Luke's account begins with the angel Gabriel telling Zachariah that his son will 'make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' (Luke 1: 17) We proceed to read all the accounts of Zachariah and Mary and their songs and prayer of praise in Luke 1. They both have angels appear to them.

Are Zachariah and Mary the only people being prepared for the Lord? By Luke 2, at the time of Jesus' birth, we are told that shepherds have not just one angel appear but a 'great company of heavenly host'. Have you ever worked night shift? I can imagine these shepherds (on their night shift) are fighting to stay awake. They may have thought that just one angel is a 'figment of the imagination', but when a whole company appears they must have had alarm bells ringing!

I worked night shift for about five years in my 20's and I can say that you can often feel like forgotten people and that you don't have much of a life outside of work. I would often wake up at night thinking, did I sleep past my alarm and miss my shift? It is God's plan to 'make ready' people that society might have labelled as 'forgotten', and at the same time provide divine insight to wise men. He is preparing us, poor and rich (spiritually and materially), to be ready again as we wait and watch for his second coming. So how are we preparing? How are we as a church preparing? The first coming of Jesus is no secret but perhaps some doubt the second. The Second Coming is no secret as Revelation is not a 'figment of the imagination' but should be alarm bells for us. Jesus says 'For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.' (Matt 5:18)

*We shall be farewelling Jonathan on Sunday 31st December. Jonathan will be starting in his new position as Chaplain at Hume Grammar on 22nd January.*



## Last Month – December

**Sunday 24th Advent 4, Christmas Eve:** 9.30 am Combined at **Holy Spirit** (all-age carol service); 5 pm Children’s Carols at St John’s; 9 pm at St John’s  
9 pm: *Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 2:1–14*

**Monday 25th Christmas Day:** 9.30 am at Holy Spirit; 9.30 am at St John’s  
*Isaiah 52:7–10; John 1:1–14*

**Sunday 31st Christmas 1:** 9.30 am Combined at Holy Spirit: Jonathan’s last day with us

## This Month – January

**Sunday 7th Epiphany 1:** 9.30 am St John’s (all-age)  
*Genesis 1:1–5; Mark 1:4–11*

**Sunday 14th Epiphany 2:** 9.30 am Holy Spirit: Sarah’s last day with us

**Sunday 21st Epiphany 3:** 9.30 am St John’s  
*Jonah 3:1–10; Mark 1:14–20*

**Sunday 28th Epiphany 4:** 9.30 am Holy Spirit  
*Deuteronomy 18:15–20; Mark 1:21–28*

## Wanted

- Another churchwarden
- More *mainly music* volunteers
- Musicians

## Money: November

Income:	Giving:	\$7,941.50
	Other:	\$12,817.89
	Total:	\$20,759.39
Expenses:		\$28,314.32
<b>Deficit:</b>		<b>\$7,554.93</b>

Giving was down.

## mainly music: January 2024

Our Christmas celebration was a terrific morning. The children were so excited that the whole program took much too long. However, no one complained. We forgot to remind the families that, while the children can dress up for the last session, we would prefer that they did not come as reindeer or Santa Claus. No one did!!!! The little girls wore ‘angel dresses’ (no wings) but I don’t think the boys did much at all. Wilma told the story and showed the children beautiful pictures as she went along.

As usual we gave each child a bag of little presents – not too much to eat – and each family received a book which was sourced from Koorong this year. Then there was the final morning tea – more like a feast than a simple cuppa!

Many are coming back next year although some have yet to respond to Rhonda’s emails. We just hope we can begin to accept some of those on our waiting list. Meanwhile, the team are having a well-earned rest!

Please pray that, as we plan the sessions for next year, we might choose what will appeal, and what teach the families more about the Love of God.

Rosemary Bellair  
(0428 595 394)

## Holy Spirit Mothers’ Union

*Wednesday November 22<sup>nd</sup> 2023 at 10 am:* After our usual cuppa and chat Val led us in our MU Service, with all taking part, singing two songs from *Covenant Songs*. Thank you to Val for doing our shopping for our two Dignity Bags. Elsie will deliver them to Bunning’s. Merion from St James’ Ivanhoe was able to deliver our lecturer a day before our meeting, We ended with Midday Prayers, praying for our Link Branch, St Mary’s Broughty Ferry Scotland; Diocesan members (meeting at St Paul’s Cathedral); Myanmar; Seafarers; and the Defence Anglican Chaplaincy.

Our first MU meeting for 2024 will be held in the church on Wednesday 24th January at 10 am, starting with Cuppa and Chat, MU Service, Business, in-house Speaker; closing with Midday Prayers for our MU Link Branch, the North/west Deanery, and the Defence Anglican Chaplaincy.

Our in-house speaker for September was Barbara Andrews, speaking on Peter’s and her trip to Queensland by train, catching the XPT to Sydney, then on to Brisbane. From there, they travelled by Queensland Rail to Cairns and back to Brisbane. Some of the highlights of the trip: Using the Hop-on Hop-off bus around Sydney (no car). Two lovely flower shows they visited, one in Toowoomba; also the Roma St Gardens, built on the old railway yards in Brisbane. Not only do they have such a great display of flowers and shrubs, but there were cute lizards everywhere sunning themselves. The other highlight in Brisbane was a twilight candle-lit concert held at St John’s Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane; then lastly a visit to Cairns Aquarium while in Cairns. After all this they spent time with family in Brisbane and then flew home to Melbourne.

Elsie Storr

## Christmas and beyond!

*Sunday December 24* 9.30 am Holy Spirit: All-age carols  
5 pm St John’s: Children’s carols on lawn  
9 pm St John’s

*Monday December 25* 9.30 am Holy Spirit  
9.30 am St John’s

*Sunday December 31* 9.30 am Holy Spirit: Jonathan’s farewell

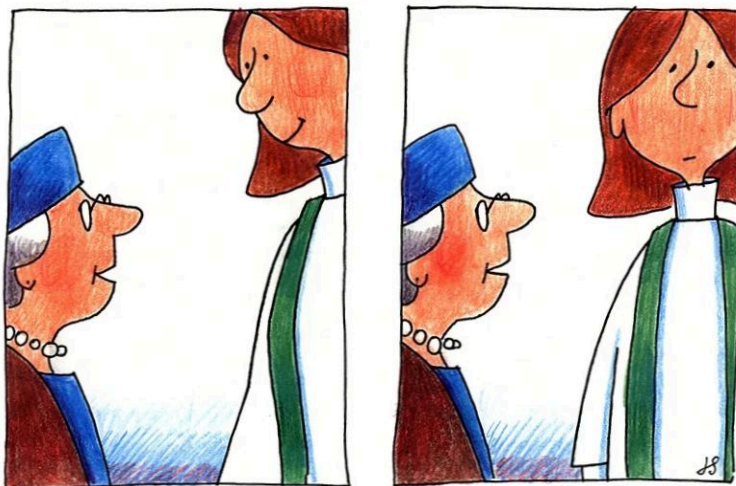
*Sunday January 7* 9.30 am St John’s

*Sunday January 14* 9.30 am Holy Spirit: Sarah’s farewell

*Sunday January 21* 9.30 am St John’s

*Sunday January 28* 9.30 am Holy Spirit

*Sunday February 4* 9.30 am St John’s: Commissioning



RECTOR, I WANT YOU TO KNOW I'M 100% IN FAVOR OF YOUR PLANS FOR CHURCH GROWTH

JUST AS LONG AS NONE OF THESE NEW PEOPLE SIT IN MY PEW.



Heather Connor, Mike Connor, Mercy Henry, the Editor, Frank Webb and Judy Thomson (above) and Rhonda Taylor and Sylvia Webb (left) enjoy the sybaritic delights (toned down to Anglican tastes) of the Vicarage. Above Rhonda's head Denise placed an alternate seating suggestion (below):



## News of Footscape

Footscape are still with us. They had to move out of the St Andrew's Parish Hall before it was demolished, but they moved into the Fellowship Hall, and are still there, even though there is no electricity. (They do understand that when the site is sold they will almost certainly have to leave.) None of this is mentioned in their recent 2023 Annual Report, but they do say:

During 2018 Footscape began renting the St Andrew's Parish Hall in Rosanna. Acquisition of this space allowed organisation volunteers to systematically store and process material aid items. It is understood that our Podiatry Material Aid Centre is the largest of its kind in Australia. In so doing the Centre helped facilitate a record distribution of footwear and socks to homeless and other disadvantaged persons through the 'Shoe It Forward' and 'Sock It To 'Em' projects. During the 2022/23 Financial Year an extraordinary 19,806 pairs

of new/second hand footwear and new socks were disseminated through sixty project affiliate organisations. Footscape has distributed over 80,000 pairs since the project was established in 2013.

As well as distributing footwear to homeless and other disadvantaged people, Footscape also is providing orthotics to disadvantaged children, podiatry services to asylum seekers, and special Foot Care Kits to disadvantaged people who have diabetes.

## Sarah Reflects

I write, sitting at the front desk of St Paul's Cathedral, staring out at grey skies, grey buildings, grey concrete barriers, and what seems to be a vast majority of grey cars and trucks and buses zooming by. Some of the grey is elegant, beautiful in a flowing sculptured design. Some of the grey is modern architecture finding its distinctiveness in angles. And other grey is plain utilitarian. It all blends together and one must focus to find the details. Yet in the greyness there are spots of colour: pink Christmas baubles, blue banners, and the odd red car or green tram flashing past my viewpoint. The red arm of an excavator rises and bends and descends beyond the grey construction site fence at Federation Square. Next to this view are the glorious stained glass doors shining despite the grey morning light, and yet their familiarity is dulling; I must look again to see their beauty.

All this greyness reminds me of the grey skies of early Sunday mornings as I'd trudge up the cobbled lane between the grey walls of Monash's pharmaceutical campus and the block of garages attached to apartment flats.

There are spots of colour as I board the 19 tram and transfer to the 514 bus at Bell Street. Grassy parks. Trees that change colour like seasonal chameleons. Gaudy displays of sequined fabric in Sydney Road's many bridal and evening wear shop windows. One glorious morning hot air balloons descended through the bright blue skies all around me. But through the tinted bus window on a oft-cloudy morning, all colour blends easily into an overall impression of greyness.

Last Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, Denise and I took Nora for a picnic at the dog park. As Nora raced to and fro greeting all her canine friends and Denise talked all things doggy with fellow owners, I took a moment to do something I haven't done in a long time. I wandered over to the fence and gazed around me, taking the time to rest in stillness, pause, and contemplate the view.

At first the world looks all green, much like the grey. Green grass, green trees. But as I rested against the fence post and drank in the scene around me, I noticed details. A spider spinning a web. A grey moth landing on a grass stalk. Bees visiting flowers, their back legs dusted with yellow pollen fluff. After a time I step away from the fence post and move along. I find brown mushrooms growing on the old wooden fence rails (see photo).



Looking back over this year at first seems a blur of activity, like one dominant colour drowning out the details. But as I pause and begin to pick out those details, I see it has been a colourful year. There have been shades of darkness in our sadness at the loss of parishioners and loved ones. There have been times of lightness as we enjoy community together at morning tea and parish lunches. For some of us there have been bright spots of fun in the youth outings: movies and sports especially. It has been a colourful, delightful year at Banyule parish.

Again I write, this time from my desk as the sun-gold green leaves and bright blue summer sky peek in through my window. It has been a busy year.

In January I was focused on work in my new role as verger at St Paul's Cathedral. At the start of February I began as student minister doing my placement at Banyule and began to meet as many of you as I could. I attended Catriona Johnson's ordination as deacon in Hobart, as did Denise and Katrina, and then semester one began at Ridley College, commencing my third year of study. That all seems so long ago – can it really be this year?

I had signed up to study Theology 1 (Doctrine of God) with Mike Bird, Pastoral Care with Richard Trist, and the Epistle of Hebrews with Andrew Malone, but had to choose an alternate option as Hebrews did not have sufficient students to run. So I was able to take Preaching with Peter Adam instead – an excellent choice for St John's and Holy Spirit, as I prepared for my first sermon on John 11, Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.

As I wend my way towards St John's on the 514 bus, I notice the colours around me. Green and grey still predominate, but the bus seats are a mid-blue, almost cobalt. Signs on the bus are sunshine yellow. Red stop buttons stud Kermit green poles and almost look Christmassy.

Where was I? Ah yes, March and April. It is hard for me to recall anything other than that first sermon, for it dominated my thoughts as I first prayed and prepared to deliver it at Banyule in 15 minutes. Then I needed to trim it to 10 minutes to submit it as an assignment at Ridley and preach it to class, before expanding it to 20 minutes in order to preach in chapel. I am deeply grateful for all your feedback and encouragement, thank you!

I arrive at St John's for the service and what a joy it is to meet and worship with you all, and to see the purple and rose candles of Advent lit in anticipation of Christ's coming.

As I leave, again I take note of the colours. The church gardens sport lilac and pink and white against a backdrop of green and grey. I wish my gardening knowledge was more extensive as I rack my brains for the names of the flowers. No, I don't know.

May and June featured a different colour palette, as red and orange and yellow leaves spun out of denuded trees to fall and blow around and eventually settle down and decompose before winter set in. It seems to me in that time that I was focusing more on learning to lead services at Banyule. At Ridley assignments came thick and fast like the flurrying leaves, and managing time and commitments and energy became a delicate balance. I recall falling sick for a week.

July and August, I feel, ought to be dark and cold in my memory by virtue of being winter. Instead, what I recall is warmth: relaxing and preaching. With your support I attended the Anglican Institute Camp and finally signed up to the official Year of Discernment sessions. The AI camp at Philip Island Adventure Resort blessed and bolstered me in ways I can barely express. The sessions on 'being a living sacrifice, not a burnt-out one' led by Dr Grant Bickerton helped me begin to address my anxieties and envision how to pace myself in ministry, and the scenery fed my soul. I could look out through the rain towards a small lake, and, between sessions, soak in the tranquillity of the lake, the soothing drizzle of rain, and the bright green of the grass around the campground.

I lean my head against the train windows and gaze out. Yes, green and grey still dominate, but rust red is a close runner up. The stations go by ... Darebin ... Clifton Hill ... North Richmond. At Flinders Street Station I shrug my backpack into place, pick up my bags and head for the escalator. I choose a baguette for lunch and hurry to St Paul's for my first Sunday shift there: working as concierge for the 4 pm Lessons and Carols service. As hundreds of people walk through the doors I see the dean in black and archbishop in purple joining the teams of welcomers to greet worshippers and inquisitive tourists, while the choir in red and white robes perform their final practice. Beside me Reverend Robert Vun wonders whether the cathedral is too full.

September and October were full to the brim with activity again, as I pursued my semester two units: Theology 2 (Creation, the Fall, the Person and Work of Christ) with Mike Bird, Prayer Book with Rhys Bezzant, and Gospel, Church and Australian Culture with Chris Swann. Perhaps a standout memory of this time is the black darkness and yellow lights of Melbourne CBD at night, when I would go to St James' Old Cathedral for the Year of Discernment sessions. I continued working as a verger at St Paul's Cathedral, serving as a chapel team leader at Ridley College, and serving at Banyule, but had to request light duties for a time as October's assignments piled up.

November and December – where on earth has the time gone? As I write, it is a week to Christmas Day, and despite my calendar in front of my nose every day, I am genuinely shocked. I stare in growing alarm at my list of Christmas to-dos and realise in dismay that many gifts will be late by the time I am ready to post them. Somehow the green of ordinary time has become the purple of Advent, and now, ready or not, the white of Christmas Day looms and another year begins.

The colours of the year have trooped past and I survey them. Yes, their uniforms are green and grey, and I can easily miss the details, the ribbons of new things learned, of experience gained. I train my mind to focus and remember the details, to see and notice, and to stop and thank God.

In January 2021 I was waiting in the YHA hostel on Flinders Street to move into Ridley's accommodation, trying to hold steady in emotional turmoil and anxiously wondering what Melbourne and Ridley had in store for me, having just moved from Albany, Western Australia. Although I believed God was assuring me that He was with me, He was equipping me, He was leading me – that, as He said to Moses through the burning bush, He made the tongue! – I wondered how I would cope and felt rudderless and inadequate. My ministry goals were simply to serve in some Christian community centre project, but I had a long-standing niggling feeling that God had something else in store.

As I ponder this parade of colour, of daily routines and busyness and beauty and stillness, I am awed. Here I stand, having successfully completed three years of study at Ridley College with at least two more years to go, and now taking steps towards ordination, God willing. Here I stand, chuckling at my anxieties of last year, when God drove me to apply for the student placement at Banyule. He knew, as I didn't then, that the Parish of Banyule was exactly the environment I needed. I am awed.

Thanks be to God, and thanks be to each and every one of you. I have loved getting to know you and serving with you.

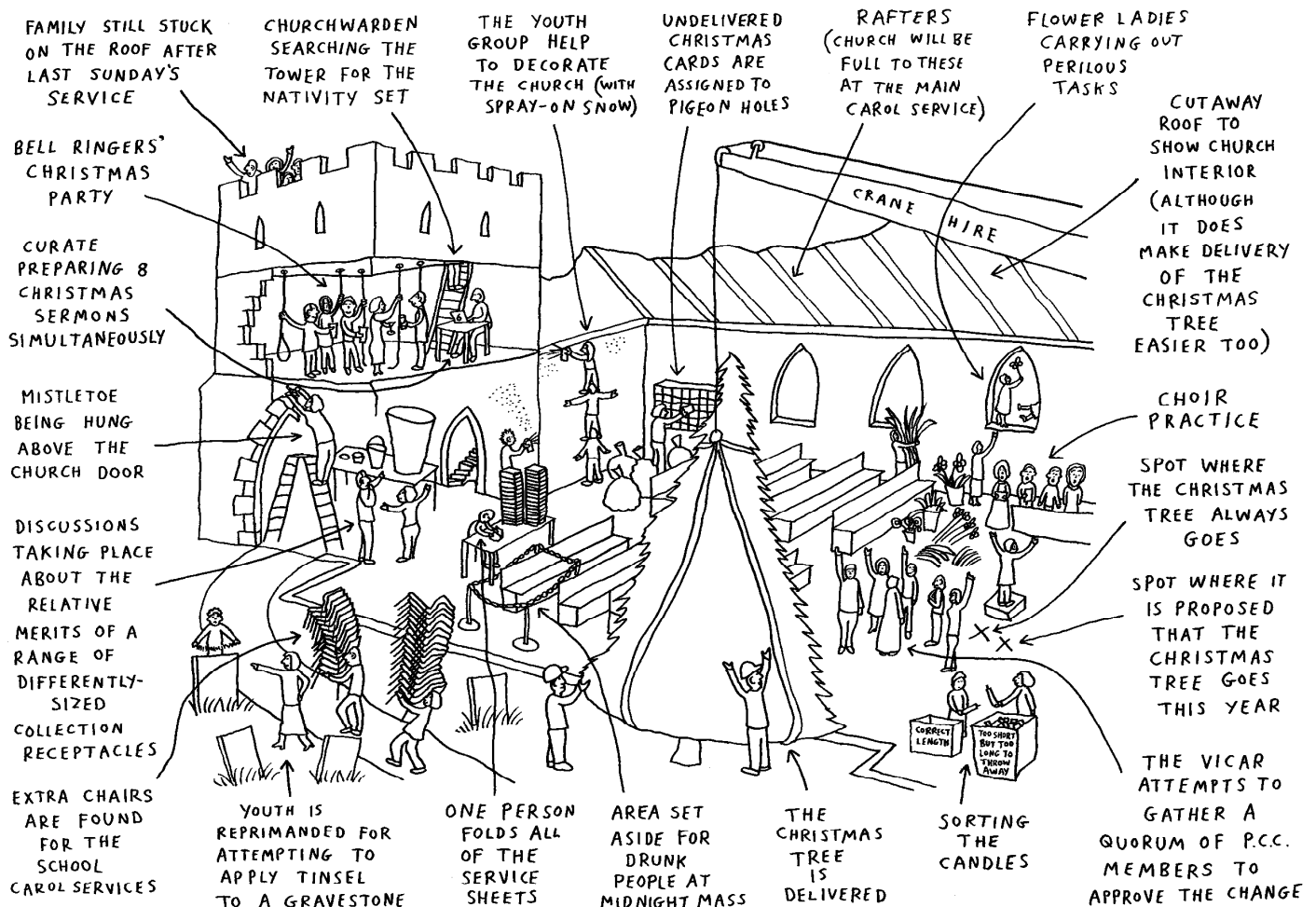
What are the colours of your year? What were the joys and delights, the highs and lows, the little details and big events?

*Sarah's last day with us will be Sunday January 14.*



*Denise with Sarah at St Paul's, demonstrating how to turn off the security camera*

## CHRISTMAS PREPARATIONS



# Mission News

I am reusing an old title here, that Barbara Robertson used to use in the early days of this journal. I shall not be able to be as comprehensive as she was, but I hope to at least keep us at least a bit informed about missions in which we are concerned.

## Indonesia

As you know, we have an interest in the Anglican Church in Indonesia (Gereja Anglican Indonesia, GAI), which is part of the Diocese of Singapore, within the Province of South East Asia. I am pleased to report several good developments:

1. Of concern to all Indonesians has been the late arrival of the wet season. The dry seemed to go on and on, causing farmers a lot of worry. The good news, and a response to much prayer, is that the rains have finally arrived. In some places, unfortunately, there has been flooding.
2. The very first Anglican Theological College (Sekolah Tinggi Teologi) opened in Bali on 26th November, in what was formerly a tourist hotel that closed during the Covid pandemic, which has been renovated and upgraded. For the first time people preparing for ordination can receive Anglican training and instruction within Indonesia. Students and teachers will be able to live in the hotel, but there are also lecture and tutorial rooms, a library and study area, an outdoor eating area, and a chapel. The College was opened by the Bishop of Singapore, and bishops attended from all over the province. In late January the Bishop of Singapore will become the new Archbishop and Primate of South East Asia.



3. At the same time, in the new chapel, twelve new priests were ordained to the GAI. This *triples* the number of priests available. Now, half of the Anglican churches in Indonesia can have ordained clergy; the other half are led by licensed lay ministers.

We may pray for the churches in Indonesia. Most of Indonesia is strongly Muslim-majority, and the churches, and Christians, are under great suspicion and sometimes danger. May Christmas be a time of support for Christians, and a time of outreach.

## Gippsland

We are supporting, through Bush Church Aid, the Rev'd Jude Benton in the parish of Croajingolong, and her husband Andy. This parish is a cooperation with the Uniting Church. It has two centres: the tiny church of St John's in Cann River (population 194), and St Peter's in Mallacoota (population 1183, but up to 9000 during holiday times), also serving the people of the township of Genoa (population 66), located where the road to Mallacoota leaves the Princes Highway. St Peter's also runs an op shop behind the church, and there is a Community Garden at St John's. There are services at 9 am on Sundays in Mallacoota, and 12 noon on the first Sunday of the month in Cann River. (There used to be weekly services at Cann River, and two a month at Genoa.) It is 70 km by road from St John's Cann River to St Peter's Mallacoota: 47 to Genoa, and 23 km along a winding road Genoa-Mallacoota.



Right: Jude Benton and husband Andy



Above: St John's Cann River; below: St Peter's Mallacoota



Summer is a peak period for Mallacoota, especially after Christmas. Scripture Union Beach Mission and THEOS both put on summer programs in Mallacoota. The op shop has many visitors, and there are even some regular summer visitors who help out.



Mallacoota has suffered much in recent years. On New Year's Eve 2019 there were bushfires that destroyed over 135 homes. Holiday makers were evacuated by the navy, but most residents had nowhere else to go. The town remained cut off for weeks, with no mains power until early February.



Jude Benton leading worship on the beach as fires threaten Mallacoota

Then in March came the pandemic and lockdowns. An isolated town was even more cut off. Deliveries of vital rebuilding supplies were suspended, and border closures made essential shopping nearly impossible. Even Zoom services were impossible, because the NBN hadn't yet reached Mallacoota and they didn't have enough bandwidth. So Jude managed to persuade the local community FM radio station to let them run a 'Radio Church' broadcast, which continued off-and-on into 2021.

More recently, floods caused a landslide which again closed the only road into Mallacoota on 29th November 2023. It was reopened two days later.

- <https://www.bushchurchaid.com.au/mission-profile.php?id=2171>
- <https://www.gippslandanglicans.org.au/parishes/croajingolong>
- <https://www.facebook.com/croajingolong/>
- <https://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au/2021/11/despite-times-of-trial-mallacootas-only-minister-soldiers-on/>
- <https://www.etermitynews.com.au/australia/a-bright-light-of-hope-in-mallacoota/>

## Denise gets installed

At a service in St Paul's on Tuesday 12th December at 5.10 pm, Denise was installed as a Canon of the Cathedral. A canon is a sort of Parish Councillor for the Cathedral, except that it's not called a Parish Council or a Vestry: it is called Chapter, possibly because it only gets a very brief mention in the Table of Contents. A few canons do proper paid jobs in the place, but most just rock up for the meetings, which are only held every two months, presided over by the Dean. (Between the meetings, the Dean more or less does what he or she likes.)

Canons get stalls at St Paul's. These stalls are not immediately in front of the stage, as you might expect. Indeed, they are not proper stalls at all. Proper stalls have full vertical dividers between them, so you can't see the canon next to you and are not annoyed by his picking his teeth or his nose or by his manspreading. But the stalls at St Paul's are only separated by armrests, like the seats on a plane, and like on a plane the armrests aren't wide enough for two arms, so there is a cold war with your neighbour over who gets the arm.

The stalls are named after famous saints, who no longer have any need for earthly chairs. Denise gets St Alban's stall. Beth Senn, whom we know well, was also installed Canon at the same service, and *her* stall is named after St Peter, who outranks St Alban. What the Editor doesn't know, is what happens to these stalls in the 60 days between chapter meetings. He suspects that rather than standing empty nearly all the time, they are usually occupied by the Dean's friends and aunties.

The service was attended by Denise (of course) and by Jonathan and his family, and by Elizabeth Lavoipierre, and by Katrina Philip. Katrina said it was a 'lovely, lovely service'. There was a shock, however, when the verger came up, resplendent in a dark grey woollen gown with black velvet facings edged with rose, and black silk stripes across the arms, and a neck pendant medallion on a sky-blue ribbon—because this magnificently-dressed verger was in fact our own Sarah Coe, doing a bit of moonlighting. She had an earphone in her ear, either to allow her to hear radioed last-minute directions to drop Denise and attend to someone important, or to hear her choice of thrash metal.

The service should have finished with a few drinks in Chloe's bar across the road, but unfortunately, seeing Denise was going to be present, the Dean decided he may as well put the December chapter meeting on straight afterwards, so she didn't have to take two trains. So the 'after-party' was a hurried affair in the 'Barbara Darling' room in the cathedral, a room



that looks like it was originally the vergers' outside lavatory, and of which Barbara Darling had as much say in the naming as Sts Alban or Peter of their stalls.

Readers of the *Brother Cadfael* books will be aware that Cadfael chose a seat in the abbey chapter behind a pillar, so he could doze off. Alas, Denise lacked that option, so we hope she survived her first chapter without swearing too loudly.

Left: Sarah looking magnificent! She is wearing John Clarke's cassock beneath

Right: After-party in the industrial grunge of the Barbara Darling room (Katrina with grandson)



The Canonry: the Cathedral big guns. Note (second from left) Heather Patacca, (centre) Denise, (fifth from right) Beth Senn



Centre: Denise; right: Beth Senn; squeezing in on the left: the Archbishop





Above: The Youth Group went to the NBL Basketball

From: Fiona Raike  
 Date: Tue, 12 Dec 2023, 3:28 pm  
 Subject: Items from St Andrew's  
 To: Denise

Dear Denise,

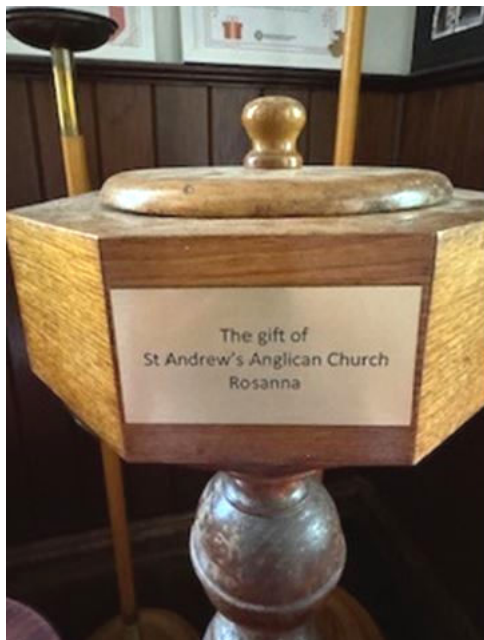
I hope this email finds you well.

Thanks again for the items from St Andrew's. The plaques were put on them today as promised. I've attached a photo of the one on the font so that you can see what they look like. I'd appreciate it if you could show the members of Parish Council.

With every good wish for a blessed Christmas and a wonderful 2024

Fiona

**Fiona Raike** | Chaplain and Senior School Teacher  
[www.lowtherhall.vic.edu.au](http://www.lowtherhall.vic.edu.au)



## The Second Coming

Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
 The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
 Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
 Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
 The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
 The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
 The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
 Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;  
 Surely the Second Coming is at hand.  
 The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out  
 When a vast image out of *Spiritus Mundi*  
 Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert  
 A shape with lion body and the head of a man,  
 A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,  
 Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it  
 Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.  
 The darkness drops again; but now I know  
 That twenty centuries of stony sleep  
 Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,  
 And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,  
 Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

*William Butler Yeats, 1919*



## Blokes Helping Blokes

The Editor felt something. He was being hit. It seemed to be with an elbow. He was very deep, far below the surface of a pool of thick treacle, rising very slowly. A voice from far away said with firmness, 'It is half past eight'.

As he rose closer to the surface, the voice grew nearer, and became his wife's voice, ordering him to get up. He pushed back the blankets that were somehow encasing him and lifted himself up through the treacle. Some minutes later he was driving through the streets, still covered in sleepy treacle. Many more minutes later he had arrived, late, at *Blokes Helping Blokes*, still in no fit condition to face the day.

And what was going on? All was not as it should have been. It transpired that Allan had infected Glen with nose-bleeds. He had had lots of them over a week and been in hospital for a day. They treated his 'Way's disease' with cauterisation, and now he was under strict instructions not to blow his nose for 31 days. As he could not see the Editor without at least a snort, Glen had had to stay at home.

Glen told Allan to lead the discussion, which was on the best Christmas the Blokes could remember. Allan told of summers with family friends at Patchewollock, a tiny town in the Mallee (present population 149) that was (in those days) the end of a railway line, and so was a railway town with a staff of one. Allan recalls taking doors off barns and he and his brother floating on dams on them. What the local farmers thought of their doors being missing he did not say.

At the age of 10 years old Allan was given a shotgun and told to get some pigeons for dinner. Allan said he got enough for a substantial pie, but did not mention how many road signs also got shot, in the traditional country way. It is of course possible that the locals hoped he wouldn't know which end of the shotgun was which, and would thereby solve the problem of their barn doors going missing.

Rob remembered childhood Christmases in Central Australia, where his parents were missionaries. (He knew what happened to the Stolen Generation first-hand.) Life was very simple, and they made their own Christmas decorations by making paper chains, from paper they had coloured themselves, stuck together with flour-and-water paste.

They didn't have a special meal on Christmas day, but he said carols had never been more sweetly sung than by the local Aboriginal girls' choir. There weren't a lot of presents, but he and his siblings used to give their parents presents. They did this by getting their pillowcases and filling them with the parents' own possessions, which the parents then got back for Christmas.

All the Blokes agreed that Christmas was much better in those days of few possessions, though being children who didn't have to pay the bills may have had something to do with it.

There were more anecdotes, but the Editor was relapsing back into somnolence and what little remains in his brain is all jumbled. Someone talked about how he had had a very small family but when he married his wife had a very large one, and it made Christmas dinners different because now he had to remember all their individual quirks.

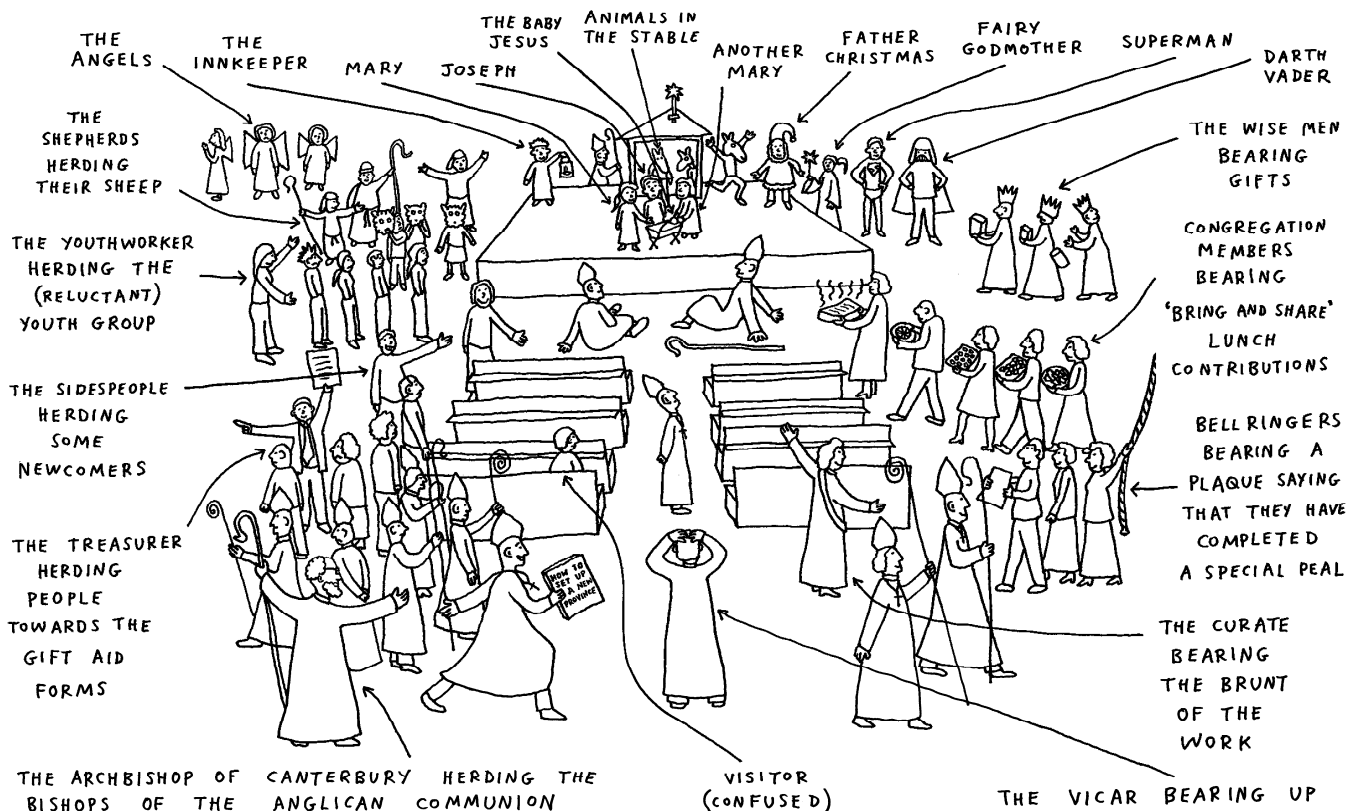
Allan went into further anecdotes, this time from when his father left the railways to take up hotel-keeping, with discussion of the 'six o'clock swill', and how it would hit drivers on their way home. The Blokes argued about when it stopped, with none of them knowing how to look this up. (Closing hours were extended to 10 pm on 1st February 1966.)

Memories of 'the good old days' led the Blokes to remember threepences or sixpences in Christmas puddings, though many still in fact kept up the tradition, using a hoard of old coins. This led to further arguments about when the silver content of Australian coins changed, again with no-one knowing how to look it up on their phones, if they had them. (Australian silver coins were sterling silver—92.5% silver, 7.5% copper—until 1946, when they were debased to 50% silver, 40% copper, 5% zinc, 5% nickel, until decimalisation on 14th February 1966. The round 50-cent coins, all dated 1966, were 80% silver, 20% copper. All current 'silver' coins are 75% copper, 25% nickel.)

Before the Blokes could get into fisticuffs over the question, Allan hurriedly declared the meeting closed. The next *Blokes Helping Blokes* will be on 3rd February, again at the Heidelberg McDonald's, 120 Bell St Heidelberg (or enter from Francis St), 8.45–10.30 am. All blokes are welcome! Enquiries: Glen 0487 852 808.

## THE NATIVITY PLAY

THE CHILDREN, DRESSED AS CHARACTERS FROM THE NATIVITY STORY, ARE JOINED BY A SUPPORTING CAST



## Bill Woolnough

14th Oct 1929 – 19th Oct 2023



Betty and Bill Woolnough were stalwart and hard-working members of Holy Spirit, who did a great deal for the church. Bill made the altar rails of the old church, and a good deal more. Betty died in late 2008, and Bill gave a seat in her honour.

Bill's funeral was held at the Fawkner Crematorium on 30th October. Unfortunately I missed it, but Bill's son Neville was good enough to send me the order of service and his eulogy. Elsie Storr and Joan Hodgson have also given me their recollections of Bill.

### Neville Woolnough said:

Bill Woolnough was born at Warrnambool in October 1929. His birth name: Ernest William Woolnough. The names Ernest and William were the names of his two grandfathers. Despite all the history and family allegiance, he was known as Bill from the day he was born.

Bill was the first and eldest of eight children, six boys and two girls. Being the first child to new, and somewhat inexperienced parents, if Bill complained, his mother fed him, and, at six months of age, Bill was weighing in at a staggering thirty-three pounds.

In the 1930's Bill's father was employed by the Railways and was posted in Warrnambool before he obtained a transfer to Melbourne. He asked his wife where she would like to live. She replied, anywhere except Fitzroy or Collingwood. A little later they arrived in Clifton Hill, literally a stone's throw from both. The Collingwood area was heavily industrialised, and times were tough. Bill said that while they had little, others had less, and went on to say it was commonplace for kids to turn up at school without lunch, and more than a few without shoes and socks. He recalled a night a friend arrived at their home with a large box full of new, but odd-bod shoes. The family spent the night pairing them into lefts and rights and matching sizes before painting them with cast iron stove paint, and Bob's your uncle, new school shoes.

Sometime later a new family arrived next door. However, Bill and his family were not allowed to play with their children, as heaven forbid, they were Catholics. Despite this, when the Woolnoughs cooked up their corned beef

the first serve was always sent next door. With further irony each Thursday a Catholic priest would walk around the streets and hand out oranges to the Catholic children. On these occasions, Bill and his brothers would each claim that they too were Catholic.

As a child Bill spent a great deal of time swimming in the Yarra River, at Dight's Falls and Deep Rock, and would regularly jump off Kane's Bridge with the full intent of drenching the passing rowers and their girlfriends in the process.

Being the eldest child did have the odd privilege, like getting first use of the bath water, which continued down the line on an age basis. Bill's father had constructed a homemade hot water service which supplied water through a pipe coming through the wall. However if someone were to overstay their bath time, then what was sent down the pipe would be somewhat less than hot. On Sunday morning Bill had the pleasure of a mandatory tablespoon of castor oil, and a fair chance of a haircut too. Bill always said that brother Brian always got off lightly here, because they either liked his curly hair, or it was just too hard to cut.

It was in 1949 at a dance in Clifton Hill that Bill met the love of his life Betty Smith, and from that point on, everything else was history. After a few years of courtship, they enjoyed many nights at the cycling velodromes and Tracey's Speedway, but they kept their love to dance. Their favourite dance was the Charmaine. One night everyone was doing the Palmer Waltz, Betty said I think we could do the Charmaine to this, and so indeed they did. The dance floor soon fell into disarray and with everyone totally out of sync, it soon became a circus. The MC ended up halting the band and commented on Bill and Betty's improvisation and went on to say for those of you who may not know Bill and Betty, Bett's the one with shiny hair, and Bill is the one with the shiny shoes.

Bill and Betty both had real concern for the ailing health of Betty's father, due to complications from his military service in World War One. Consequently, they arranged their wedding for the first of March 1952. The day went off as a great success. Surprisingly, following the wedding, Betty's father's health improved, and he went on to live for a further 36 years, Bill always reckoned that he was conned in the scam of the century. After their wedding they moved in with Betty's parents and they bought their first car which was a 1929 Chevy, and saved as hard as they could to buy their first home.

In 1958 they bought their block of land in Watsonia, which was completely covered in blackberries. Betty was always confident, but Bill held real concern as to what the block was going to look like once it was cleared. Fortunately it was a great block, and there they built their loving home. Betty soon became a member of the Ladies' Guild at the Holy Spirit Church and met people who would become lifelong friends and enjoyed years of social activity with the group. The Church always had an annual fête to which many contributed. Bill and Alan Jones traditionally manned the barbeques while the local kids drove everyone crazy ringing the tram bell, which Bill had provided.

The Woolnough family spent a lot of great camping holidays with Beth and Alan Jones and their family. They originally started

off in old canvas tents before they upgraded to caravans, and they were fantastic times. Today if you go to a caravan show they will tell you you need a bullbar, a long-range fuel tank, four solar panels, and so forth. Their caravans were quite modest by these standards, but they got enormous value from what they had, and they saw great destinations all over Australia. In later years Bill, Betty and Beth and Alan all become members of the Greenwood Probus Club and they were still taking part in the club's organised trips, so overall their travelling window together would be around the forty-year mark.

Bill and Betty were both great Collingwood supporters, and irrespective of the weather they would attend the football week in, week out. Furthermore, for years they would rotate day and night as they would camp out with the army of Collingwood faithful to hopefully get their finals tickets.

Bill and Betty were also renowned for hosting their Australia Day Barbeques which were always popular and well attended. On one occasion they even got a visit from the police helicopter after it lowered down with a big spotlight for a closer look.

Bill worked at Preston Workshops for over forty years as a Wood Machinist before his later appointment to Ancillary Shop Supervisor where he took over the Fibreglass, Trimmer's Shop and the Mill and Benches. Bill also worked alongside his two sons Neville and Craig and collectively they served the tramway system for more than a hundred and twenty years. Alongside Bill's career with the tramway network, he studied and became a qualified Podiatrist. From that point on Bill also worked in this capacity for four nights a week for almost twenty years.

Despite the hours that Bill worked, Sunday was always family day. This meant that every Sunday Bill would drive to Clifton Hill and East Brunswick to pick up his mother and parents-in-law, while Betty prepared her vegetable soup and cooked her traditional lamb roast for everyone's lunch. Lunch was always enjoyed with Channel Seven's World of Sport in the background, and after enjoying a relaxing afternoon, Bill would then drive everyone home. Not a bad effort on your day off.

Bill was a proud and patriotic Australian, he would never vote to become a republic, nor would he change the Australian Flag. He would fly his own flag on Australia, Remembrance and Anzac Day, and to make a point it even featured in his caravan's setup.

Bill enjoyed great company with family and friends at Watsonia RSL, and Morning Melodies. He was the first elected President of Greenwood Probus Club, and he and Betty also held the positions as Almoners of the club. Bill was also a proud Blood Donor, a qualified First Aid Officer, and he and Betty both received Australia Day Awards for their service to the community. Bill was superb in his commitment and dedication to the care of his wife Betty as she twice suffered through treatment and ordeals of cancer.

Bill was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather who stood as a great pillar of support for his family and was loved and will be enormously missed and remembered by all.

### Bill is survived by:

Neville, Kayleen, Carol, Peter, and Craig

**His Grandchildren:** Emily, Matthew, Christy, Michael, Trevor, Daniel, Troy, Kate, Alyce, Nicole, and Cara.

**His Great-grandchildren:** Madison, Lex, Jordon, Caitlyn, Shane, Connor, Ashleigh, Ella, Will, Jack, Blake, Riley, Hannah, Talon, Isabel, Chayse, Asher, Jacob, Ava, Mitchell, Evie, Roman, Ryder, Eden, Indi, Hudson, Harlow, and Vance.

*Elsie Storr recalls:*

One of our [Mothers' Union] speakers was Bill Woolnough. The family had donated the flag to go on the pole in front of the Church and Bill spoke on the protocol of putting up the flag, and asked if he and Craig [son] couldn't put the flag up [on Anzac Day], if a member could. I said yes. It was great seeing our Australian flag flying.

My friends Betty and Bill Woolnough: I first met Betty and Bill in the early years of Holy Spirit Church at the present site. (John and I attended the old Church of the Holy Spirit [at Yallambie]; it was sold to the Shell service station.)

There was so much work to do at the new church, setting up for Sunday School and church, then back for the dancing school during the week. There



were always lots of activities at the church, and Bill was part of the men's team. One time they were painting the church ceiling from a scaffold on wheels. John Storr and Alsia Glover's husband were painting and Bill was part of their pushers.

When Bill knew John was home after cancer treatment, at times he would come around for a short visit. After I

retired from work I worked at the Ladies' Guild op shop and the handle came off the toilet door and I was locked in, being rescued by my co-worker Glad Sinfield. Next morning I went to church with a Philips-head screwdriver to give to the first man to arrive. It was Bill. I told him what had happened. He had a good chuckle and said, 'You could have been locked in all night'. After the service there was a check on all the door looks to find two more needed altering.

*Joan Hodgson recalls:*

Bill loved going away caravanning with the Joneses and the Hodgsons, the three families together going right around the country.

Bill was a mad Collingwood supporter.

He worked for the Tramways in the Preston Workshops for nearly 50 years. Two of his sons also worked there, and one still does. He also worked in the evenings, for a second income, as a chiropodist. He was a very hard worker.

He and Betty were often to be found working in the op shop.

# THE PARISH CHRISTMAS TREE

THE THINGS THAT ARE HANGING ON IT (AND THE PEOPLE WHO HAVE DONE THE HANGING)

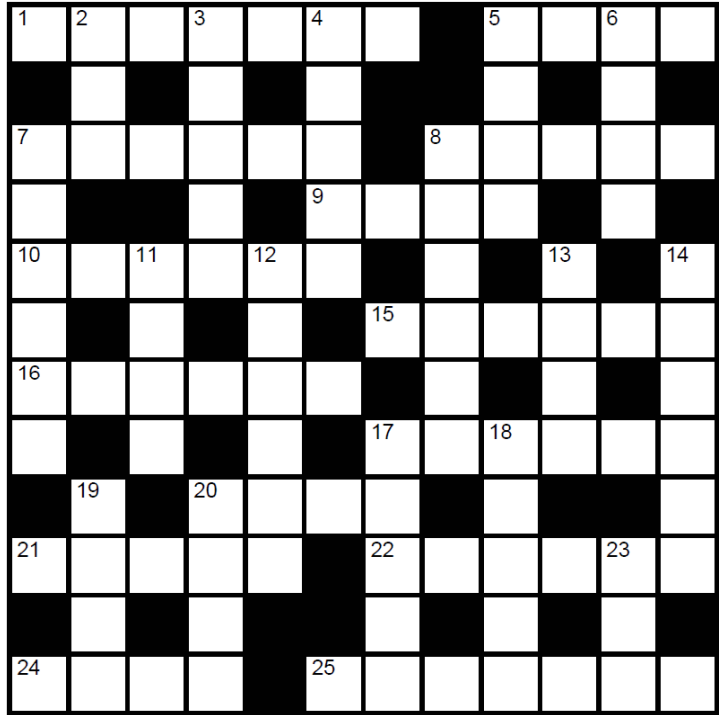
- 1 SPACE FOR LITTLE ANGEL, IF ANYONE CAN FIND ONE
- 2 CHILDREN'S INSTRUMENTS (NO ONE WILL ADMIT TO LOFTY PLACEMENT)
- 3 BELL (BELL RINGERS)
- 4 SAW USED TO CUT TREE DOWN (MEN'S GROUP)
- 5 TINSEL MADE FROM OLD SHREDDED SERMONS (THE VICAR)
- 6 BANNERS AND BADGES (UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS)
- 7 TRADITIONAL NATIVITY ANIMALS - GOAT, ZEBRA, TRANSFORMER ETC (SUNDAY SCHOOL)
- 8 MEMORY STICK CONTAINING CHRISTMAS IMAGES (PARISH I.T. EXPERT)
- 9 TEA BAG (COFFEE ROTA VOLUNTEER)
- 10 CHURCH MOUSE (CHURCH CAT)
- 11 CORKS (SOCIAL COMMITTEE)
- 12 WRAPPED PRESENTS DESTINED TO FORM SLIGHTLY AWKWARD SERMON ILLUSTRATION
- 13 THURIBLE (HIGH CHURCH ENTHUSIAST)
- 14 HAND-KNITTED BAUBLES (LADIES' GROUP)
- 15 HYMN NUMBER CHAIN (SIDESPEOPLE)
- 16 DUSTERS (CLEANING VOLUNTEERS)
- 17 TRACT DISPLAY (LOW CHURCH ENTHUSIAST)
- 18 GLITTER (MESSY CHURCH)
- 19 ARGUMENT BETWEEN RIVAL 'COLOURED TREE LIGHT' AND 'WHITE TREE LIGHT' FACTIONS
- 20 BOX OF NON-COLOUR-SCHEME DECORATIONS REMOVED FROM TREE (BY UNNAMED PARTY)

Across

- 1 Haman's end (7)
- 5 Cereal grain (4)
- 7 Messiah (6)
- 8 Grind (5)
- 9 Priest who returned from Babylon with Zerubbabel (4)
- 10 Roman ruler (6)
- 15 Like a lamb (6)
- 16 Parable feature (6)
- 17 Don't cast them before swine (6)
- 20 Insects (4)
- 21 Number of years Aeneas was bedridden (5)
- 22 Capital of 8 down (6)
- 24 Flavoursome plant (4)
- 25 Mark (7)

Down

- 2 Tree, mentioned only in Isaiah (3)
- 3 They may be girded (5)
- 4 Purified by Elisha (5)
- 5 Nathanael's home (4)
- 6 Flower of Sharon (4)
- 7 Foul weeds (6)
- 8 Origin of Timothy's father (6)
- 11 Christ's yoke is this (4)
- 12 Sanctify with oil (6)
- 13 Celestial body (4)
- 14 Biblical divisions (6)
- 17 One of David's hymns (5)
- 18 Loathe (5)
- 19 Spouse (4)
- 20 Defeated Benhadad (4)
- 23 Joshua's father (3)



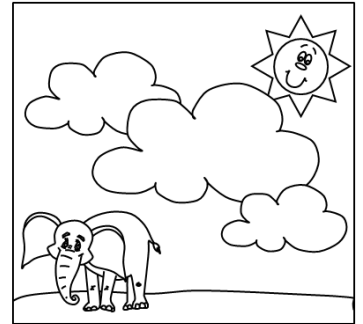
by Philologus

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R J O P P A S A C K C L O T H  
 P E S D N I W T A E R G W H U  
 R E D H M S H S A R A L N E G  
 A F R E O A S S S R I U O D E  
 Y O A D M L R E O E S S W E F  
 E R O E E P Y I N G R H E E I  
 D G B D D C T T N D R T I P S  
 I I R N E A R I E E E A S S H  
 S V E A W V H E O M R K C I H  
 O E V M O C A S E N P S C D D  
 B N O M R O T S T N E L O I V  
 E E L O T N A L P Y F A E L W  
 Y S C C A S T L O T S E V A W  
 E S A L V A T I O N W O R H T  
 D E E W A E S Y A D Y T R O F

Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

Creation Story Anagram



hidden word: \_\_\_\_\_

a d e k n r s s \_\_\_\_\_

a a i l m n s \_\_\_\_\_

a e e h n v \_\_\_\_\_

a e h r t \_\_\_\_\_

a r s s t \_\_\_\_\_

b d i s r \_\_\_\_\_

f h i s \_\_\_\_\_

g h i l t \_\_\_\_\_

www.dtk-kids.com

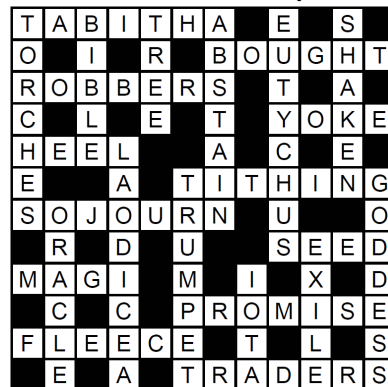
Bible Word Search – Jonah

All the words listed below are in the puzzle – left, right, up, down or diagonally. Find each word and circle each letter of the words you find. After you have found all the words, the leftover letters form the **mystery answer**.

[https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws\\_Jonah2\\_0.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_Jonah2_0.htm)

- Arise, Cargo ship, Cast lots, Commanded, Decree, Disobeyed,
- Distress, Forgiveness, Forty days, Great wind, Holy temple,
- Huge fish, Joppa, Leafy plant, Mariners, Overboard, Prayed,
- Redemption, Rowed, Sackcloth, Salvation, Saved,
- Scorching sun, Seaweed, Shade, Tarshish, The deep, Thrown,
- Violent storm, Waves, Wickedness

Answers to last month's puzzles



Bible Word Search mystery answer:  
**RESURRECTION**

Last month's anagram:

- efil \_\_\_\_\_ life
- einqu \_\_\_\_\_ unique
- aenprtt \_\_\_\_\_ partner
- adegrn \_\_\_\_\_ garden
- ahppy \_\_\_\_\_ happy
- aekns \_\_\_\_\_ snake
- bdeiosy \_\_\_\_\_ disobey
- aadehms \_\_\_\_\_ ashamed
- cehlost \_\_\_\_\_ clothes
- aeimnopttt \_\_\_\_\_ temptation

# St Andrew's Day

26th November 2023

Deuteronomy 30:11–14; Matthew 4:18–22

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

## Matthew 4:18–22

<sup>18</sup> As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' <sup>20</sup> At once they left their nets and followed him.

<sup>21</sup> Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, <sup>22</sup> and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

## John 1:40–42

<sup>40</sup> Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. <sup>41</sup> The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ). <sup>42</sup> And he brought him to Jesus.

Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas' (which, when translated, is Peter).

Today we're thinking about St Andrew. And especially, this is the first year that we haven't been in St Andrew's Rosanna, where we usually are around this time, when we mark Christ the King, the Sunday before Advent, and also St Andrew's Day. So we thought we really want to do something to honour St Andrew, and especially the people of St Andrew's who've now made their home church here at St John's, or at Holy Spirit.

Well, St Andrew's Day:



<https://www.awarenessdays.com/awareness-days-calendar/st-andrews-day/>

You will know that cross, that 'well-shaped cross', the Scottish cross. I particularly like this:



<https://pawprintfamily.com/product/st-andrews-day/>

The Scottish tourism sites have lots (as well as Nessie) about St Andrew, and how important he was to Scotland. It's a very well-celebrated day, as the Scots are wont to do—we'll see that in a moment.



<https://news.knowledge.com/In/en/articles/st-andrew-s-day-today-who-is-he-why-scotland-celebrates-him-here-s-all-d5621e6d71aa10/a429caca356b495f0e19351e?source=ss>

So here we have a lovely stained glass of St Andrew looking very Scottish with his red beard—but I don't think that's what St Andrew looked like, coming from the Middle East. Unlikely for him to have had red hair, and certainly not pale skin, but anyway . . . and there we see the flag of St Andrew, and a ruin of a church in Scotland.

On St Andrew's day there are lots of festivities in Scotland (see below). I particularly like this one of the pipers wearing the MacLeod of Lewis tartan, because that's my tartan. You might know where your tartan is from. Anyone here, put your hand up if you have Scottish heritage! Quite a lot of us! Oh well done, that's fantastic! And we even have an Andrew among us today, which is fantastic! Hi Andrew, give everybody a wave! Good boy! Fantastic! Yay Andrew! Welcome! Here's one I prepared earlier, a little example.

So there's often great celebration, second only to Hogmanay, and then Robbie Burns night in Scotland.

My grandfather was a Scot. He emigrated out to Australia under one of the programs between the two World Wars and he went straight bush and so he lost his accent—very unusual for a Scotsman to lose his accent. In fact one of the things he used to tell my brother and me to do was, we'd say, 'Pop,

where's your accent?' and he said, 'I've lost it: go find it.' So we'd go looking for it. We said, 'What does it look like?' He said, 'You'll know it when you find it.' So we used to—well I think after a few minutes we'd get bored of that game.

I did go to a Highland Games once in Sydney, and that was super fun. My brother was given a little dirk—a little Scottish dagger. I got a doll. I was not very impressed with that doll. Mum said, 'But you've got a lovely doll in there, right?' I said, 'But he got a knife!' I thought it was much better. Mum said, 'No it's not a knife, it's a dirk.'

Yes, we know that St Andrew is the patron saint of Scotland. But do you know he is also the patron saint of these following places that might surprise you: Barbados, Bulgaria, Colombia, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, and Tenerife in Spain. So he is much loved and admired.

We had from our Bible reading how St Andrew was one of the first disciples called. In fact the Greeks call him *Protokletos*: he was the *first called*. We know that from John's gospel: that John records Jesus calling Andrew first, who then went to get his brother Simon, who ended up being called Peter. But what we notice about St Andrew is he was always included in the list of the Apostles. He heard Jesus' call and followed him.



[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/08/WS5cbd2c58a3104842260b77fe\\_4.html](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201904/08/WS5cbd2c58a3104842260b77fe_4.html)

But even before that that, as John's gospel tells us, he was following John the Baptist, and he heard what John had said about who Jesus was: the Lamb of God. And so what does Andrew straight away want to do? Bring his brother to see Jesus—to see the Messiah, the Christ, the Saviour, the sent one.

Andrew is only mentioned in Scriptures a few times: in Matthew's gospel he's mentioned twice; in Mark's gospel four times; Luke's gospel just once; John's gospel five times; and in the Acts of the Apostles once. So he's mentioned in all of the Gospel accounts of Jesus and in the book of Acts and we don't know an awful lot about him. But history does tell us a few more things.

What's important about St Andrew is what we learn about him. Yes, his name means 'manly' or 'valour'. It was clear that he was a person who sought after God, who longed to be connected with God, who followed Jesus and was always one of the Apostles. Even when he's not mentioned, unless when Jesus takes a few of the disciples aside, Andrew was there, seeing Jesus. Andrew was one of the ones as well who was scattered when Jesus went to the Cross.

But as well as following Jesus, he told someone else: he told his brother, and he brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus. It's clear that he kept learning from Jesus. We know that after the disciples were equipped with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the disciples, now designated the apostles, went about telling people about the risen Lord Jesus, and Andrew was one of those. There's a bit of debate about where he went to but we know that it was in the area of Cappadocia, Galatia and Bithynia, around the area of Türkiye and the Black Sea, we think.

We also know that he followed his Lord Jesus unto death. He was martyred under Emperor Nero in about the year 60 CE. People held that he had been crucified a bit like the Lord Jesus, but not in the same shape as the Lord Jesus' cross, but in that cross-shaped cross. That's really from mediaeval times, but from the 4th Century it was felt that he had been bound to the cross rather than nailed, to make his suffering even more intense; and that he lasted a few days on the cross, and kept telling people about Jesus.



<https://www.etsy.com/au/listing/1074175760/saint-andrew-icon-the-apostle-handmade>

And that's why in this Greek icon we have him with the—hey kids, do you remember what that glowy thing around the head is called? Hey Will, do you remember from last week (or week before)? It's like the name of a car, an old—was it a Nissan? That would help. No, it wasn't the Sunbird, it wasn't the 120B or 140B, it was a Nimbus around his head\*. So he's depicted as a martyr for Jesus. So usually in the church on St Andrew's day we wear a red stole; but today I wanted to wear all my Scottish bling, as Sarah referred to it as. So when Mum died—I'd always loved this Scottish brooch. I think she got that at the Highland Games too, probably pretend amethyst with thistles around it. But then when Mum died, why have one kilt pin when you can have three! So I have lots of different ones and another Celtic brooch as well.

So we learn a lot about St Andrew from the Scriptures, but also from church tradition. From the Scriptures we see that he was somebody who listened to Jesus, followed Jesus, told others about Jesus, and served Jesus, throughout his whole life.

On this day I want to pay honour to the people from St Andrew's Church: St Andrew's Rosanna, our church. And I want to pay honour to them for the way that they have heard the call of Jesus, followed Jesus, and are keeping following Jesus—whether they're attending this church, or another, over the years—but they are faithful to the model of St Andrew. Of course they don't follow St Andrew: even St Andrew didn't follow himself, he followed Jesus.

And so I'm going to do something a bit different today. I would like the St Andrew's people to come up the front, and I'm going to pray for them. So Mavis isn't here today but Peter is, Sylvia and Frank are, Allan and Joan are, Rhonda and Geoff are, Judy is; so come down the front please, St Andrew's people. Helen, you'd better come down too. Just stand in a little mob at the front so that people in the livestream can see you. Just move over that way, Peter. Very good, just stand there. In front, Helen, please. Because people won't get to see . . . yes, that's right. Well, they're not going to do what they're told: that's OK. [Laughter]

I want on this day, when we celebrate St Andrew's day, to let you know that whilst our St Andrew's Church building at Rosanna has closed, the St Andrew's people are still here, and I want on this day to honour them and give thanks to God for them. You will see around our church a number of things that represent St Andrew's, and that were used at St Andrew's, such as the beautiful Eva Schubert Pascal candle holder, the lovely stained glass window, now leading into the children's room, that was originally from St Philip's Heidelberg, and our altar linen today: the linen on the Lord's table was from St Andrew's as well. They're just things, but here are the people: the people who heard the message of Jesus, who met together most weeks, who heard about Jesus, and who have kept following Jesus.

\* The Nimbus was actually a Mitsubishi, available in Australia 1984–2004. The Sunbird was a Holden, the name they gave to late-model four-cylinder Toranas. Denise was probably thinking of the Nissan Bluebird, a long-running series: the 160B/180B/200B were variants on the Bluebird. There was no 120B; Denise may have been thinking of the iconic Datsun 120Y. There may have once been a Nissan 140B Light Delivery Vehicle in South Africa.

So I'm going to pray for them. And I also want to say, for people who have been through the closure of a church, it's still very painful. There are still things that are happening. We're still not quite sure what's happening with the land. Yes, we have moved the Memorial Garden; and I've taken on board what was said at the APM, and I'm going to look at a way of beautifying the Memorial Garden as it is at the moment, rather than just have the soil covered over—I've had a look in Bunnings and Mitre-10 and I'm going to have a talk with Robin, the expert handyman, haha, but some ideas—I'm going to talk them over with Robin and Parish Council, what we can do. And of course we have the Memorial Book already here in place that was at St Andrew's.



<https://www.banyuleparish.org.au/our-churches.html>

It's pretty painful, so I want to pay tribute to our St Andrew's folk for their faithfulness, for their continuing to follow the Lord Jesus, and for encouraging us by remaining here with us. So let me pray for them, and then we're going to give them a big Scottish woo-hoo—well, whatever you want to say, Scotland. Let me pray:

*Gracious God, we thank you for the witness of St Andrew, who heard the call of Jesus and followed him, who brought others to follow him, who followed Jesus, and, equipped by your Spirit, kept following Jesus to his life's end. We thank you, Father, for our brothers and sisters from St Andrew's Rosanna. We thank you for their faithfulness in the midst of pain; their continued faith in the Lord Jesus; and, most of all, their presence among us, which encourages us so much. Lord, in the midst of sadness, encourage them by your Spirit, as we join together as one parish from our three centres. And we pray, heavenly Father, that we, like St Andrew, would all be faithful to you to the end. We know that we can't do this on our own, and so we ask for the continued blessing and grace of your Holy Spirit. Bless our friends we pray, in the name of our risen Lord Jesus whom we serve. Amen.*

Let's give our St Andrew's people a big clap. [Applause] You can sit down now. Well I'm just going to pray this prayer that we continue to grow in the love of Jesus. Let's pray this prayer together.

*Lord God, we pray that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. Amen.*

## Advent 1

3rd December 2023

Isaiah 64:1–9; Mark 13:24–37

### Isaiah 64:1–9

64 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down,  
that the mountains would tremble before you!  
<sup>2</sup> As when fire sets twigs ablaze  
and causes water to boil,  
come down to make your name known to your enemies  
and cause the nations to quake before you!  
<sup>3</sup> For when you did awesome things that we did not expect,  
you came down, and the mountains trembled before you.  
<sup>4</sup> Since ancient times no one has heard,  
no ear has perceived,  
no eye has seen any God besides you,  
who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.  
<sup>5</sup> You come to the help of those who gladly do right,  
who remember your ways.  
But when we continued to sin against them,  
you were angry.  
How then can we be saved?  
<sup>6</sup> All of us have become like one who is unclean,  
and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;  
we all shrivel up like a leaf,  
and like the wind our sins sweep us away.  
<sup>7</sup> No one calls on your name  
or strives to lay hold of you;  
for you have hidden your face from us  
and have given us over to our sins.  
<sup>8</sup> Yet you, LORD, are our Father.  
We are the clay, you are the potter;  
we are all the work of your hand.  
<sup>9</sup> Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD;  
do not remember our sins for ever.  
Oh, look upon us we pray,  
for we are all your people.

### Mark 13:24–37

<sup>24</sup> 'But in those days, following that distress,  
"the sun will be darkened,  
and the moon will not give its light;  
<sup>25</sup> the stars will fall from the sky,  
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken."  
<sup>26</sup> 'At that time people will see the Son of Man  
coming in clouds with great power and glory.  
<sup>27</sup> And he will send his angels and gather his  
elect from the four winds, from the ends of the  
earth to the ends of the heavens.  
<sup>28</sup> 'Now learn this lesson from the fig-tree:  
as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves  
come out, you know that summer is near. <sup>29</sup> Even  
so, when you see these things happening, you  
know that it is near, right at the door. <sup>30</sup> Truly I  
tell you, this generation will certainly not pass  
away until all these things have happened.  
<sup>31</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my  
words will never pass away.  
<sup>32</sup> 'But about that day or hour no one knows,  
not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but  
only the Father. <sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do  
not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It's like a  
man going away: he leaves his house and puts  
his servants in charge, each with their assigned  
task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.  
<sup>35</sup> 'Therefore keep watch because you do  
not know when the owner of the house will come  
back – whether in the evening, or at midnight, or  
when the cock crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup> If he comes  
suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping.  
<sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!"

## At St John's

Sermon by Sarah Coe

As a kid I used to take my dad's books and read them. They were mostly Christian books, stories about persecuted and tortured Christians in Russia and China and Romania, trying to survive and keep the faith. I read stories of miracles. Stories of drug addicts and alcoholics becoming Christians and getting free from their addictions—books like *The Cross and the Switchblade* or *Chasing the Dragon*. Or like *God's Smuggler*—smuggling Bibles to Christians in Asia and the Middle East. Stories of courageous missionaries facing lions and cannibals and seeing God do amazing things. Stories of heroic martyrs.

So as I was reading this passage in Isaiah 64, I thought, gosh, this could be me as a teenager. Come, God! Show your power and prove to me that you are really there! I've read so many stories about you, in the Bible and in church history, even recently. But they're just stories to me. I want to see your amazing power for myself.

And maybe for you, you want to see God coming in power. Maybe you want your mates to see God's power too. Maybe you really want them to believe in God. Or maybe you'd like to see God smite a few people. Maybe they just aren't convinced that there is a God, and you reckon if God did miracles and stuff they might just respect you and listen.

But what would it be like to see God in power?

It's easy to want to see God's power – but just like Isaiah's people, we might begin to realise that God gets angry about sin, and... well, maybe... no, not maybe—definitely... we aren't perfect. We sin too. What would God say about the things we've said in online games? What would God say about the videos we've watched? And the things we've done in secret... the fights we've had... Yeah... everyone else might do it. It doesn't seem so bad—and other people are way worse than us—so shouldn't God be more mad at them? But, we're not all that innocent, ay?

Like Isaiah and the people of Israel we remember: 'You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them—against your ways—you were angry. How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.'

We're now in the season of Advent. This is the first season of the church year, when we remember Jesus coming to earth, being born as a little baby, just like us; God's gift to a world of sinning people at Christmastime. We begin again the cycle of the church year, remembering Jesus' life on earth. At Easter we'll remember Jesus' death and his resurrection, how he died to atone for our sin and evil, and how he rose again to offer eternal life to everyone who trusts and follows him. At Ascension Sunday we'll remember how Jesus returned to heaven, where he sits beside God the Father and prays for us. At Pentecost we'll remember that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in us so that we can become new people in Jesus Christ.

And then we come back to Advent, to right now. We are remembering Jesus coming to earth the first time.

Advent is also about Jesus' return. We are also looking forward to Jesus' second coming, the coming of God in power.

Isaiah chapter 64 begins with this call: *Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies!*

And God says yes! He will come!

In Mark chapter 13, Jesus promises us: *At that time people will see the Son of Man—who is Jesus himself—coming in clouds with great power and glory. And he will send his angels and gather his elect—who are people that trust in him—from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.*

But Jesus also warns us: Keep watch! Be alert – you don't know when he's coming back! He says in verse 37, *What I say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!"*

So let's go back to Isaiah. We do want to see God come in power, don't we? To save us, to save this world from all its problems and decay and corruption and evil. We want God to burst in from heaven like a superhero and save us from the complete mess we're in.

But are we ready? Are you ready, anytime, for Jesus?

As a kid I used to worry that Jesus might return soon and I wasn't ready. I wanted to travel the world and have fun first! And I didn't think I was too bad, but maybe there were one or two things I ought to confess to God.

The people of Isaiah recognise that they need to get right with God and live his ways. Just like us, they remember, and they remember too that God is our Father. God is their Father, and God is our Father too.

God cares for us. While he does get angry at our sin and the wrong that we do, he really loves and cares for us. So as a kid I started confessing to God what I thought I was doing wrong, and asking for his forgiveness and his help. I was scared that God wanted me to be perfectly correct and always well-behaved, and while there was a bit of that, I found that what God really wants is for me, and for you, to live a whole new life, a rich, wonderful life, a life of joy and peace and hope.

So as we look forward to celebrating Christmas, when Jesus came as a baby, and as we also look forward to Jesus coming back – please, I really want to encourage you to consider trusting in Jesus and following God's ways. He will one day come back in all power and glory, so be prepared.

But above all, trust Jesus and follow him, because he's the best gift you could ever get.



## At Holy Spirit: *Keep Watch*

Sermon by Helen McAlley

### 'Dad's coming'

The American Larry Hoffsis described how he grew up on a farm which meant that there were many chores for the children in the family to do after school. It also meant that the children could play basketball. The barn was so arranged that there was room in it for a full basketball court. The father of the family was happy for his children to play basketball. However, for the children, the problem was in keeping track of the time and making sure that they had time for their chores as well as for the game. When their father came in from the field, he would expect that the children would be well advanced with their work. In the excitement of playing basketball, the children would sometimes forget that their father would soon be home and that there would be an accounting of what they had done. Sometimes, the youngest brother in the family would be appointed as a watchman. He would listen for the sound of the tractor or the happy tune of his father's whistle. Then there would be the cry that sent everyone to their job, 'Dad's coming!'

Hoffsis goes on to explain that the reason they scrambled to do their jobs was because the children loved their father and they knew that he loved them too. They rushed to do their jobs because they wanted to give him a good accounting of their time. They did not want to betray the trust their father had in them.

### A man on a journey

Does that story sound familiar? It might remind us of Jesus' story in our Gospel reading today. Jesus tells a story or parable to His disciples telling them to be alert. He has been explaining to them about His own second coming. He explains that nobody, not even He, knows the hour that this event will take place. Only the Father in heaven knows. So the disciples are to be alert and watchful. And this story is included in the Scriptures to remind us that we too need to be alert and watchful. Jesus is coming again, and we must be ready for this wonderful event.

The situation of Jesus' return is like that of a man going on a journey. Jesus knew that He would soon be ascending into heaven. He would be physically away for His disciples like that man going on a journey. Before the man leaves home, he puts servants or slaves in charge of his property, each with his own work to do, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch for his return. In a similar way, the followers of Jesus are to be alert, watchful and ready for His return. We are to be ready at any time for this event because it could happen at any time. Just as the doorkeeper in the parable has to be ready for the return of his master at any time, the evening, midnight, cockcrow or dawn, so we too are to be ready for the return of Jesus which could happen at any time.

### Keeping watch or sleeping

In this story two metaphors or word pictures are used to describe how Christian might be found when Jesus returns. They can be 'keeping watch' or 'sleeping'. 'Keeping watch' means being faithful to Jesus and busy with the work He has called each of us to do. It means that we are faithful, sharing the gospel and living holy lives of service. In contrast, 'sleeping' suggests that people are turning away from following Jesus, allowing themselves to be distracted by the things of this world and forgetting that we have a wonderful Saviour

who loves us but who will one day, call each of us to give an account of the way we have used our time and talents.

It is very easy to 'sleep' or to stop being faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to make a determined effort each day to follow Him, especially as being a Christian nowadays in Australia is counter-cultural. Our culture today tends to be secular, humanistic—glorifying the human being rather than God—and even atheistic—denying that the Lord exists and living as though this world is all that there is for anyone. The Bible says, 'The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."' This means that people do not want to submit to God. They want to be their own god. The secular media seems to be constantly giving the message that God is an irrelevant concept in modern-day living.

### Learning from history

We can learn too from history how people have forsaken following God. England in the eighteenth century was not a pretty place. On the threshold of being a great power, it was beset by problems of poverty, injustice, corruption and drunkenness. The church was called to minister and bring the gospel into this situation. But the church was not on watch. It had fallen asleep, to use the metaphor of Jesus. The Church of England had 11,000 positions for clergy paid from state revenues. 6,000 of these were occupied by men who never stepped foot in the parishes they were called to serve. Instead, the parishes were left in the hands of poorly-paid curates. The absentee clergy lived luxuriously, some in London, some even on the Continent, as far away as they could get from the church they had been paid to care for. England was a spiritual desert. The church was the object of withering ridicule from leaders of the newly emerging Enlightenment Movement. It was a time of judgment. And sadly, we are still suffering today from the effects of the Enlightenment—a movement which forsake God for the worship of reason.

It is easy to be judgmental of others. Rather than judging, we need to learn from them. The apostle Paul wrote, 'Let the one who stands take heed lest they fall.'

### The example of the Wesley brothers

God was gracious in His sovereignty and love and sent help into that desperate situation in England, by calling the Wesley brothers, John and Charles, to minister in that situation. They preached the love of God and the forgiveness of sins. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were manifested in their meetings and Charles Wesley wrote thousands of hymns which taught the message of the Scriptures to many who at that time were unable to read them. The Methodist Church and later the Uniting Church have come from the work of the Wesleys.

What would have happened if the Wesleys had not been faithful to their calling? Just as the lack of duty of many of their day is a warning to us, the faithfulness of the Wesleys is a good example to us. We may not have the type of ministry that they had, but we can choose to be obedient to the Lord in the way that He shows us. The Bible says that we all have good works that the Lord has prepared for us to do (Eph 2:10). Some ministries are spectacular, some are quiet, but all are needed in God's kingdom.

### Affluence

The Wesleys were noted for their honesty, their sobriety and their willingness to work. And what did that lead to? Ironically, it led to

worldly success and prosperity. This led John Wesley to worry that success and riches might lead the church astray. He wrote, 'For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger and love of the world in all its branches.'

We in Australia face the temptation to forsake the Lord because we have so many material goods compared to most other people in the world. How often do we hear someone say that they don't know what to give someone else for their birthday because they 'have everything'. In contrast, many Christians in less affluent countries than ours seem to be more fervent in their faith. For example, I heard of a group in Indonesia who would spend one night a week, all night in prayer. They would often fast and were devoted to God's work in a way that Western Christians often are not. I heard of an indigenous Indian woman involved in a mission who fasted totally one day a week for thirty years as she prayed for the work of the mission.

### How can we keep watch?

We should not compare ourselves to others or we can become discouraged or proud, but we can look to them as good examples and praise God for them. We have to live in our own culture, but always need to 'watch' or be alert to the temptation we have to forsake the Lord and His work when we have an abundance of material goods. It is important to reflect on what we can do to respond in a godly way to Jesus in our situation today. We may not pray all night, but can we have times of prayer throughout the day when we sit in His presence or read His word? Can we be diligent in praying for the needs of others, maybe being organised by having a prayer list, as well as responding to needs as we become aware of them throughout the day? Can we give to others gladly and generously, knowing that in so doing, we will have treasure in heaven and that that is infinitely better than all the earthly treasure we might have? Can we commit our whole lives to the Lord, knowing that He is guiding us in everything, asking that we might be a blessing to others and that the Lord would prompt us by His Holy Spirit to do the works that He has called us to do? Can we be willing to share our faith when we are asked about the 'hope that is within us'? With God's help, can we be kind and loving and by our love, often shown in practical ways, be a witness to others? As we do these things and others too, we are keeping alert and watchful, ready for our Lord's return.

### Acting in gratitude

We serve the Lord not to gain His favour or that He will love us more. He already loves us perfectly and completely. Rather, we act in gratitude for all that the Lord has done for us. He has forgiven our sins and saved us from eternal punishment. He loves us as His precious children and helps us in everything.

Through Jesus, the Lord gives us 'all things that pertain to life and godliness.' We can choose with God's help to remain faithful to Him day by day. Or we can choose to turn away from Him. Will He find us 'keeping watch' or 'sleeping'?

### Prayer

Shall we pray. *Dear Lord, help us ever to be alert and watchful each day of our lives so that we will always be ready for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Come Lord Jesus.' We pray in His name. Amen.*



## Advent 2

10th December 2023

Isaiah 40:1–11; Mark 1:1–8

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

### Isaiah 40:1–11

<sup>1</sup> 40 Comfort, comfort my people,  
says your God.

<sup>2</sup> Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,  
and proclaim to her  
that her hard service has been completed,  
that her sin has been paid for,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand  
double for all her sins.

<sup>3</sup> A voice of one calling:  
'In the wilderness prepare  
the way for the LORD;  
make straight in the desert  
a highway for our God.

<sup>4</sup> Every valley shall be raised up,  
every mountain and hill made low;  
the rough ground shall become level,  
the rugged places a plain.

<sup>5</sup> And the glory of the LORD will be revealed,  
and all people will see it together.  
For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.'

<sup>6</sup> A voice says, 'Cry out.'  
And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

'All people are like grass,  
and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of  
the field.

<sup>7</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
because the breath of the LORD blows on  
them.

Surely the people are grass.

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers and the flowers fall,  
but the word of our God endures for ever.'

<sup>9</sup> You who bring good news to Zion,  
go up on a high mountain.

You who bring good news to Jerusalem,  
lift up your voice with a shout,  
lift it up, do not be afraid;  
say to the towns of Judah,  
'Here is your God!'

<sup>10</sup> See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power,  
and he rules with a mighty arm.

See, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense accompanies him.

<sup>11</sup> He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
he gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young.

### Mark 1:1–8

<sup>1</sup> The beginning of the good news about Jesus  
the Messiah, the Son of God, <sup>2</sup> as it is written in  
Isaiah the prophet:

'I will send my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way' –

<sup>3</sup> a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
"Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him."

<sup>4</sup> And so John the Baptist appeared in the  
wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance  
for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>5</sup> The whole Judean  
countryside and all the people of Jerusalem  
went out to him. Confessing their sins, they  
were baptised by him in the River Jordan.

<sup>6</sup> John wore clothing made of camel's hair, with  
a leather belt round his waist, and he ate  
locusts and wild honey. <sup>7</sup> And this was his  
message: 'After me comes the one more  
powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I  
am not worthy to stoop down and untie. <sup>8</sup> I  
baptise you with water, but he will baptise you  
with the Holy Spirit.'

I wonder how far you have got in your Christmas preparations so far? Perhaps you are like me and have chosen your wrapping scheme for the year, of what your presents will be wrapped in—I'm a bit strange like that. Maybe you've started your shopping. Anyone finished their Christmas shopping? Oh, a few people, well done!

And if you're baking, I know that on 'Stir-up Sunday' people usually make their Christmas pudding. I know that Rhonda made a Christmas cake last week; I think Olive's been working on her Christmas cakes. Anyone already prepared their cakes and puddings? If you're like me you just go to the shop and buy it, a very nice one. I did try once—oh my Lord, what a disaster!

Well, in Bible Study this week, we were talking about our Christmas preparations. And we thought, well, what do we have to do for cooking? Well, we have to figure out what we're eating for Christmas, go shopping, and of course even before we do the shopping we need a list—that's always best.

If we're thinking about the gifts, we need to do the shopping, and of course whether you do it online or in a real shopfront, we need a list. Even if it's not written down, it's in our head, of the people that we want to buy for.

Cards: many people still send cards—thank you to those who've sent some to me already, that's been lovely—and again, we have to shop for the cards, shop for the stamp, and . . . I haven't even seen any Christmas stamps this year—well actually, I probably have, I haven't noticed them on the cards I've received . . . but we need a list.

Preparation! We need to prepare. Or, as it was said when I was at Uni—and I'll clean this up a bit—'poor preparation produces pretty poor performance'. Peter McKay would be laughing, because he knows the true version of that.

*Preparation.* Mark's gospel—his biography of Jesus that we heard the beginning of read today—begins with preparation. It says, *the beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God.* So in Mark's gospel, his biography is all about Jesus, but he begins, not with Jesus, but with the one who prepared the way for Jesus: John the baptizer.

John's life's work was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah. Yes, he had his own followers, but he always knew that he was pointing to someone who was following him, someone who was more important than him, someone who was the Messiah, the Saviour.

Isaiah prophesied: *I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way – a voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him."* And that's why Mark begins with John the Baptist, in fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. Mark says in his biography of Jesus, *so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

John's proclamation was all about making straight paths. We would quite like a nice straight level smooth path around our church, and leading up to our church. Those of us

who frequent the Watsonia shops, or that area, we know the congestion that has occurred because of the Northeast Link Project, and the roads being moved and dug up. In the ancient near East it was a very, very rugged terrain. Well actually, it still is. The road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a 27 km road that connects both of those cities. It's about as far as from here to Werribee. I drove down there<sup>†</sup> the other day, and with the congestion and inevitable roadworks it took just over an hour to drive. When you're walking down that road in Jesus' times, you would go from 754 m above sea level at Jerusalem and in those 27 kms you would go to Jericho which was 276 m below low sea level—a very, very rugged terrain: the road drops one kilometre in those 27 km. It was steep, winding, descending, and remote, and for centuries was a place of robberies and many sufferings.

For us who have been born and grown up in Australia, that imagery is a bit hard. We talk about our mountains and our Snowy Mountains—they're really hills compared to mountains in other parts of the world. Travelling in Kyrgyzstan, driving along roads, you couldn't see the top of the mountain; and the Kyrgyz people would say to the expat Aussies who were living there, 'You look at the mountains, and see beauty. We look at them with fear, because they can slip and fall on us.'

So for us Australians living in a very flat land, we really have to come to grips with the imagery, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament in the gospels. We have the sayings of the prophets, and also of Jesus' biographers: *In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.* And so we have this image, in a very mountainous and rugged terrain, of every valley being raised up, and every mountain and hill made low—an evening out, a smoothing out. The rough ground shall become level; the rugged places a plain.

The idea is **preparing** for the one who is coming: getting ready for the coming of God. In our sort of modern-day parlance we might say, 'Roll out the red carpet! Sweep the road!' Sweep the path: get rid of the little acorns, and make it smooth for God's coming. John, like the Old Testament Prophet Elijah before him, announced God's coming, and said to people, 'Get ready! Smooth the way for the Messiah!'

John is the Advent character or emblem. For Advent always begins in the darkness, looking to the light of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, as judge of all: the quick and the dead, as the old Creed says. So John begins with the need for humanity; for forgiveness. That's why he preached a baptism of repentance.

Isaiah too in the Old Testament speaks of humanity being as impermanent as grass. Again we in Australia know all about the uncertain life of living off the land, when there is drought and the grasses and the crops wither under 45° or 50° heat. Or when there are floods, and they rot. It's a very precarious thing isn't it? And Isaiah contrasts the life of the grass—of even humanity being like grass—with God, who is himself the very Word of Life, the one who endures forever.

\* Indeed he does; but so, he suspects, do most other parishioners.

† Werribee, not Jericho.

And so Isaiah announces the coming of God with contrasts. Did you hear that beautiful contrast in the Isaiah passage as Olive read it to us? It says as God comes, as his Messiah comes, *he tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.* So we have those images of God's Messiah coming: tender, close, and gentle; and we long for that.

Earlier this week, Jono and Helen and I met for our staff meeting, and we read these passages. And Helen reminded us that when Isaiah was writing, he was speaking to a people who had been carried off into exile, into slavery; whose women and children were often separated from the men, whose children were even separated from their mothers, and they had to walk on without them; and the anguish and suffering. We see the physical and mental suffering of displacement of peoples all throughout our world, don't we? The physical and mental suffering. The awful images on our screens: children kidnapped, women crying for their little ones. We see it in Israel and Gaza. We see it in Afghanistan. We see it in our own Australian neighbourhoods, where due to family violence about one woman per week is killed by an intimate or previously intimate partner—in Australia.

So we long for the Messiah to come. We long for that strong but gentle, fearsome but close and tender comfort from God. We long to hear that promise of God's comfort, as he said *Comfort, comfort my people. He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young—keeps them together, and is gentle.*

This time of Advent is the in-between time: the time between Jesus' first and second coming. We live in the **now**, because we are God's people now, and we live in the **not yet** as well, because there's an overlap. We are redeemed now, through Jesus Christ; we are God's people now, when we put our trust in him; we have God's Spirit now, through Pentecost. And yet we wait. And yet we wait for the return of our Lord Jesus in power, in glory, and in gentleness for his lambs.

We live with the anticipation of the closing chapter of this world. For some of us—well for all of us—it's closer than it was yesterday. None of us knows when we will go and be with the Lord. None of us knows when Jesus will return. We await the next page of the new chapter of the new Heavens and the new Earth that Jesus promises.

And so in Advent we wait. This is our time of preparation: preparation of praying, of trusting, of hoping, in Jesus. With hope in, and hope through, and hope for, our only hope: the Lord Jesus. This is our time of preparation.

Advent is a great time to remember that the Lord Jesus is coming again. Yes we look forward to Christmas and that often occupies a lot of our mind, especially in these couple of weeks to go before Christmas Day; but we as God's people look forward to his coming again, where he will carry us gently close to his heart, and be fierce and strong, yet gentle. And so we say, 'Come, Lord Jesus!' Amen.

## Nine Lessons and Carols

18th December 2023

Sermon by Rachael Lopez

We all have our favourite Christmas traditions. It might be certain events we attend or food we eat or even the way we wrap gifts. For me, it's decorating the tree with Zion, eating ice-cream plum pudding, and watching the Carols on TV. But there is also aspirational Christmas Rachael who makes pavlova, creates photo gifts and has all the presents beautifully and thematically wrapped. I'm hoping she'll appear for Christmas 2024. You might have your own traditions or aspirations for Christmastime.

This service, Nine Lessons and Carols, is a tradition dating back to 1918, and was constructed out of the grief and horror of World War 1, which ended six weeks before Christmas Eve. Crafted by The Rev. Eric Milner-White, a King's College Cambridge graduate and college chaplain. Having served as a military chaplain, Rev. Eric returned to King's College Cambridge as Dean after witnessing the horrors of trench warfare.

Motivated by the need to grieve the loss of young men, including many from King's College, and to revitalise liturgical practices after the war, Rev. Eric created the service as a gift to the city of Cambridge. With 23% of King's College members having perished, the first service on Christmas Eve in 1918 aimed to honour the departed, even though the fate of many was still unknown. At the same time, Rev. Eric sought to convey the simple beauty of Christian worship, emphasising the story of God's loving purposes through the windows and words of the Bible.

That is why the original service, leaves no room for a reflection but my own tradition is to preach the Sunday before Christmas so here I am.

So, as I delved into these nine passages, the theme of peace stood out to me. And this is what I want to talk about today. The verses from Isaiah, particularly, show the promised Messiah as the embodiment of peace, bringing a reign characterised by justice and righteousness.

From Isaiah 9:6–7:

*For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given,  
and the government will be on his shoulders.  
And he will be called  
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
7 Of the greatness of his government and peace  
there will be no end.  
He will reign on David's throne  
and over his kingdom,  
establishing and upholding it  
with justice and righteousness  
from that time on and forever.*

Some of you may know that for the last few months I've been working for Anglican Overseas Aid. They have projects across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and in war-torn Middle East. In the present, we are confronted by the harsh reality of ongoing wars around the world. Each week in the Anglican Overseas Aid office we take turns in sharing a devotional and last week someone shared one titled 'Bless the Advent we Actually Have' by Kate Bowler. Here is an excerpt:

*"Here we are at the precipice of Christmas. Sounds... ominous? Well, that's probably because our bodies instinctively remember the knot of nervous energy that propels us through it all.*

*The busyness. The hustle. The last-minute-wrapping. The delight of Christmas lights (after they are hung, of course). The WOULD-YOU-STOP-ARGUING-WE'RE-SUPPOSED-TO-BE-MAKING-MEMORIES moments. There are so many desires and longings wrapped up in every parcel, every must-make recipe, and must-do tradition. We dream of creating a glistening Christmas for our families or friends that makes us tired even before we're finished imagining it.*

*But what if we could take all those ideals and see what's underneath, at the root of it all? It's our hopes for peace and joy and love for ourselves, our people, and for our world. And we say, God, show us again how this goes. How do we bless the Christmas we actually have?"*

With 7 major wars happening around the world and mess in our own lives... grief, stress, conflict... how do we continue to tell the story of the arrival of the Prince of Peace?

**Firstly, we tell the story creatively to our own context.**

This is a similar question that Rev. Eric Milner-White asked in his role of Chaplain and then Dean at King's College Cambridge. Just six weeks before Christmas Eve the apparent 'war to end all wars' ended and he was tasked with spiritually caring for a community shattered by war, having endured trauma himself.

This service is what he created to respond to a particular need at a particular time in a particular place. We too can be creative in responding to the needs of those we minister to. We too can write liturgy, design services and prayers that minister to the people of Banyule.

We can tell the story of Jesus in a creative and engaging way, the way Rev Eric was compelled to do so.

**Secondly, we tell the story of Jesus' coming as subversive.**

There is this song I've been listening to this Advent called *Manger Throne* by Phil Wickham. Here are some of the words:

*You could have stepped into creation  
With fire for all to see  
Brought every tribe and nation to their knees  
Arriving with the host of heaven  
In royal robe and crown  
The rulers of the earth all bowing down*

*But You chose meekness over majesty  
Wrapped Your power in humanity*

*You could have marched in all Your glory  
Into the heart of Rome  
Showed them splendour like they'd never known  
But You wrote a better story  
In humble Bethlehem*

That phrase, **wrapped your power in humanity...** I imagine Jesus being wrapped in swaddling clothes by his mother Mary and laying him in a manger.

Hear these words about Jesus from Philippians 2:6–7.

*Who, being in very nature God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;  
rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

And how is that verse introduced?

Verse 5: *In your relationships with one another, have that same mindset.*

Consider for a moment how this type of leadership stands out. How, if everyone truly understood and followed the words of Jesus we wouldn't have dominance, oppression and destruction throughout our world.

Now, people complain a lot about the Australian media and their treatment of Christians but there is one day a year we get a reprieve. One of my favourite traditions growing up was watching the *Carols by Candlelight* at the Myer Music Bowl. Well... on the TV anyway. For one night only on National TV, we can hear Silvie Paladino and Marina Prior preach the gospel between songs. We can listen to Amazing Grace and the Hallelujah Chorus and many of the carols we have sung today. Words like:

*Truly He taught us to love one another;  
His law is love and His Gospel is Peace  
Chains shall He break, for the slave is our brother  
And in His name, all oppression shall cease*

Each year I marvel at the strangeness of this public celebration, and pray the words reach into the hearts of those who do not know Jesus.

So, how do we continue to tell the story of the arrival of the Prince of Peace in a world of war and suffering?

**Firstly, we tell the story creatively to our own context.**

**Secondly, we tell the story of Jesus' coming as subversive.**

**And thirdly, we tell the end of the story.**

From Isaiah 7:6-9

*The wolf will live with the lamb,  
the leopard will lie down with the goat,  
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;  
and a little child will lead them.*

<sup>7</sup> *The cow will feed with the bear,  
their young will lie down together,  
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.*

<sup>8</sup> *The infant will play near the cobra's den,  
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.*

<sup>9</sup> *They will neither harm nor destroy  
on all my holy mountain,  
for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea.*

On a lighter note, have you ever seen those strange animal friendships in the news? Sometimes they will show something like that right at the end. We've just heard 20 minutes of war and destruction and local disasters, 8 minutes of sport but right at the end before the cheery news reporter (not sure how they can be so cheery) says 'Good evening' there will be a story about:

Bubbles the African Elephant and Bella the Black Labrador

Bea the Giraffe and Wilma the Ostrich

Tinni the Dog and Sniffer the Wild Fox

Torque the Dog and Shrek the Owl

Cat and the Fox

Milo the Dog and Bonedigger the Lion

Kasi the Cheetah and Mtani the Labrador (who still don't eat each other when grown up)



While they might give you warm and fuzzy feelings at the end of the news, they help us look forward to the vision the Bible gives us, a future without death and without war. This promise was reiterated in Isaiah's foretelling of a time when swords will be beaten into ploughshares. As believers, we are tasked with actively pursuing peace in a tumultuous world and the ending of all conflicts.

Unlike 2000 years ago, this year in Bethlehem there are no celebrations for Jesus' arrival. Munther Isaac, Lutheran Pastor and Academic Dean of Bethlehem Bible College shared this image.



*"Our hope is in our faith. Our hope is in our resilience. So, while Christmas celebrations are cancelled, Christmas prayers are not cancelled. And, maybe when we look at the image of Jesus under the rubble, we see a light of hope and life coming out of destruction, light coming out of death."*

I will end with this poem from two Australians – William Small and Dean Johnston – that picks up these themes.

### Subversive Nativity

*Divinity enfleshed; arrives in our home  
from the heights of the cosmos  
descends to soil and stone  
Creator of all things; mysterious, unknown  
Here now revealed in skin, blood and bone*

*In a world often driven by market expansion  
Surely Christ will be found in a palace or mansion?  
Verified influencer with power to flex  
But we must look elsewhere for the Word become flesh*

*Teenage mother, dubious status, lowly esteem  
Labours in a backwater town occupied by a brutal regime  
Mother and child endangered; 'collateral damage'  
So they flee south to the border, desperate for safe passage*

*The refugee God escaping infanticide  
Empires always trade in innocent lives*

*You can read it as history;  
a story from 'back then'  
Or you can survey our moment:  
It happens again*

*Where then should we look for this divine child?  
The calm, quiet infant, so tender and mild?  
In ornate nativities, shopping centre displays?  
Dressed in whitewashed nostalgia, saccharine glazed?*

No.

*Look where the bombs fall, search where there's trouble  
Dig through the dirt, 'God's under the rubble'  
Pick through hospital ruins, covered in confusion  
Where the wounded lie desperate for a life transfusion*

*See an orphan of war in a broken incubator  
Could this be the Christ, could this be the Saviour?*

*Meanwhile the world averts its gaze  
We detach from discomfort, deny the malaise  
We pray for 'peace' so our conscience won't confront us  
Rather than the peace that's embodied in justice*

*Christ is always born beneath the shadow of Pharaoh  
Recognised by wounds rather than a heavenly halo  
It doesn't matter what flag is flying, or government installed  
Christ is always found on the other side of the wall*

*Continually incarnate into a subversive nativity  
Upending power, infusing suffering with divinity  
And it always happens where we least expect it  
God chooses to dwell with those who are rejected*

*So, this Christmas don't look  
to the corporate displays or towering steeples  
You'll find the cruciform God  
born in the suffering of crucified peoples.*

## Parish Council Notes

### Meeting of Monday 11th December

#### Business arising from APM

- Electoral Roll Review Committee: Kaye Collins.
- Parish Nominations Committee: Kaye Collins.
- 'Assent to Serve' documents all signed.
- Vicar to approach members of congregation re Parish Council, Warden.
- Ad for a half-time assistant minister sent to Reece at Ridley College.

#### Finance report

- November 2023: deficit \$7,554.93.
- Diocese has increased our annual assessment from \$19,704 to \$44,233, based on our income increase, including Betty Kettle's bequest, Parish Giving Day, government grants. Examine report for possible discrepancies.

#### St John's porch

- Discussions with Peter Harper re making the St John's front entry safe. Need a cherry-picker to check for and remove any loose pieces on the bell tower roof.
- Wardens will arrange installation of hoarding over the front entry if necessary.
- Want to resolve quickly as one christening and one wedding booked for January 2024.
- As the Diocese has approved the release of Banyule's share of the money from the sale of the Watsonia Car Park, make written request for funds for urgent action on restoration.
- Contact Steeplejack Jones.

#### St Andrew's Rosanna

- Had decided to review Parish's contractual arrangement re the sale. Three current operatives; Andrew at the Diocese, Marcus from EY, Savills the agent. Marcus' frank and fearless contribution and liaison with Andrew and Savills is valuable for the parish. Determined current arrangement should remain.
- [Sale discussions]

#### R.I.M.M.

- Comprehensive *Risk Identification and Mitigation Matrix* prepared by Andrew Fegan following an assessment on 1 November of St John's hazards. He will review further on 1 Jan 2024. Matters listed remain 'Open' until resolved.
- Tripping hazard of decking boards/nails at entrance to the Upper Hall. Marine ply on top of the boards might be a solution: follow up.

#### Child Safety Officer

- Currently Jonathan; new appointment needed. Anyone willing?

A man with no arms walks into a church and asked the priest if he could be the new bell ringer.

The priest said he was unsure if he could hire him, but would give him a chance.

The man went to the bell tower and started running into the bells head first to make the most beautiful sounds the priest had ever heard.

Unfortunately, on his second attempt the man missed the bell and fell out of the tower and died.

The priest ran outside to the body and asked the gathering crowd if anyone knew who he was and they all said no, but his face did ring a bell.

#### Family Safety Champion

- Judy Thompson willing to continue.

#### Diocesan professional standards

- Most items for Dec 2023 completed.
- Draft timeline for 2024 APM as required.
- Stages I, II, III of Safe Ministry Training must be completed by all members of Parish Council. Mercy and Glen will need to do.

#### Vicar's report

- Ill health of some of our members.
- Thankful for the support of Helen McAlley.
- Attendance at PVAW evensong at St Paul's Cathedral 28 Nov with Judy Thomson.
- I've been trying to attend *mainly music* this term.
- 2023 Bible study ended – 2024 2 pm Tuesdays.
- Prayer Brekky concluded for 2023 – next year on 3rd Sunday of each month in 2024.
- Christmas services are upon us! Very thankful for the support of Wardens to be with my Dad this Christmas (carer's leave) – though I will miss this special time of year with you all.
  - Thanks to Jono, Helen, Sarah for stepping up.
  - Thanks to Bishop Brad and Bishop Genieve who will preach and preside at St John's at 9 pm on 24/12 and 9:30 am on 25/12 respectively.
- I will be back in time for Jono's final service with us on 31/12.
- Induction of new minister at St Margaret's Eltham Thursday 16 Nov.
- Meeting with the Dean 22 Nov.
- Attendance at Ordination service 25 Nov.
- Bp Brad's Oodthenong Christmas party 6 Dec.
- Clergy Remuneration and Working Conditions Committee 7 Dec.
- Induction as St Paul's Cathedral Canon on Tue 12 Dec (5:10 pm).
- DJN Professional development:
  - Coaching (encouraged) with Rev Matt Williams on 24 Oct – free
  - Supervision (mandated) with Ms Mandy Lane on 1 Nov
  - Spiritual Direction (encouraged) with Julie Mitchell on 14 Nov
- Good governance seminar with Rhonda Taylor at Brimbank on 28 Oct.
- 30th reunion Moore Theological College class of 1994 (8–12 Nov).
- Attendance at Watsonia Traders AGM as key stakeholder on 15 Nov.
- DJN on annual leave 15 – 29 Jan inclusive – Helen McAlley as locum.
- Denise seeking a student for 2024.

A few minutes later another man walked up and claimed that the armless man was a dead ringer for his brother.

In the foyer of a church, a young boy was looking at a plaque with the names of men and women who had died in various wars. He asked the pastor, "Who are these people?" The pastor said, "Those are members from our church who died in the service." The boy asked, "The early service or the second service?"

ME: How much to buy a singing ensemble?  
PRODUCER: You mean a choir?

ME: Fine, how much to acquire a singing ensemble?

#### Associate's report

##### • Summary:

- Design and distribution of Christmas ads
- Offered/accepted Chaplain at Hume Grammar
- Marriage Retreat 17/11 – 19/11
- Moving home from the 21/11
- Attended Hume Grammar end-of-year chapel
- Prayer day 29/11
- Youth Final outing: 03/12 – NBL game
- Handover to Denise: Mailchimp (church weekly email), Weebly (church website), Livestream update. Short explanation on Canva & Facebook.
- Final pastoral visits.

##### • Thanks:

- Marriage retreat and all who took care of Zion while we were away: Denise, sister & friends.
- Youth outing NBL and how God will be at work in these youngsters.
- Job, family & friends in the west and a home.

##### • Prayers:

- Christmas services whilst Denise is away.
- Rest before starting at Hume (22/01).

#### Wardens' report

- Peter Harper placed bunting to exclude entry to the front of church.
- Moved access ramp to side chapel entry.
- Met Peter Harper to arrange a safe entrance to front of church via side bell tower doors.
- Banyule Council grant for \$2000 towards heating/cooling St John's Upper Hall.
- Banyule Council permit received for St John's car park works. Outlines much detailed and specific care of the heritage Bhutan Cypress. Architect has put the project out to tender.
- Handyman: some repairs at Holy Spirit.
- Ongoing input with negotiations re sale of St Andrew's. Other parties involved include the Diocese, EY and Savills (estate agent).
- Provided access to Lowther Hall and Brimbank Anglican to collect items from St Andrew's.
- Stored hymn, prayer books from St Andrew's in cupboard in children's room.

#### General business

- After getting another grant, heating/cooling for Upper Hall at St John's a step closer. Negotiating price with Rosanna Heating & Cooling.
- Footscape can keep using the hall at St Andrew's until settlement of the sale.
- AA haven't paid for hall use for at least 3–4 months. Follow up.
- Suggest alternating monthly combined morning services between Holy Spirit and St John's: gives Watsonia some exposure to a morning service—agreed: start March service at HS.

*Minutes by Rhonda Taylor, précis by Editor*

Mr. Green peered over his fence and noticed that the neighbour's little boy was in his backyard filling in a hole. Curious about what the youngster was up to, Mr. Green asked, "What are you doing, Jimmy?"

Tearfully, little Jimmy replied, "My goldfish died, and I've just buried him."

"That's an awfully large hole for a goldfish, isn't it?" Mr. Green said.

Patting down the last bit of earth, little Jimmy replied, "That's because he's in your cat!"

*Various sources*