

BANYULE BABBLE

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

JANUARY
2023

Office: 1 Burgundy Street Heidelberg 3084 ph. 9457 1144

Ministers: **Denise Nicholls** 0438 856 376
Helen McAlley 0447 372 972

Jonathan Lopez 0403 660 776

Internet: www.banyuleparish.org.au

email banyuleparish@gmail.com

Editor (author of all unsigned articles): Peter McKay 9459 5852 petergmckay@hotmail.com

J IS FOR JOY

ONE of the last public gatherings I was able to go before COVID hit was a talk by Tim Costello. He mentioned that one of the reasons for believing in God was the human experience of Joy. It struck me as I never really connected belief in God with joy. I thought joy was just being happy. But as I pondered, 'What is joy?' it started to make sense. I thought of the various moments of joy I have with Rachael and Zion. Perhaps this is even what Joseph and Mary experienced as Jesus was born.

As we know the Bible lists Joy as a fruit of the spirit: Gal 5: 22–23 (below). It isn't one that is easily explained.

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

In Gen 46:29 Jacob's reunion with Joseph is a picture of joy. Similar to this is the picture of the prodigal son returning to the father. Perhaps Joy is somehow part and parcel of being a parent? But people who are not married can experience Joy too.

Miroslav Volf says of joy: the emotional dimension of the good life, of a life that is both going well and is being lived well.

C.S. Lewis says: "I sometimes wonder whether all pleasures are not substitutes for Joy", and "I call it Joy, which is here a technical term and must be sharply distinguished both from Happiness and Pleasure. Joy (in my sense) has indeed one characteristic, and one only, in common with them; the fact that anyone who has experienced it will want it again... I doubt whether anyone who has tasted it would ever, if both were in his power, exchange it for all the pleasures in the world. But then Joy is never in our power and pleasure often is."

The first traces of the word Joy in the Bible comes from Leviticus 9 as the Levite priests began their public ministry in worship: when all the people saw what was offered to God was pleasing to him, they shouted for joy and fell face down. The Magi as they found Jesus were 'overjoyed' and worshipped him. But is JOY only for some people? In this Christmas season we should remember that in fact the angel announces to the Shepherds 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause **great joy for all the people.**'

To explore JOY further there is a link to a discussion on joy and I found it fascinating that joy can be birthed out of oppression and pain. It is much like the metaphor Jesus uses in John 16 about childbirth.

Joy is certainly a gift that can come out of a relationship, worship and even despair and pain.

Exploring Further: A great discussion between Willie James Jennings and Miroslav Volf on the Theology of Joy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fKD4Msh3rE>

Jonathan



Image: Magi – Rev Robyn Davis: *The Gift*

Christmas and beyond

Saturday December 24.....5 pm St John's (carols); 11 pm St John's

Sunday December 25.....9 am Holy Spirit; 10.15 am St John's

Sunday January 1.....10.15 am Holy Spirit

Sunday January 8.....10.15 am St John's

Sunday January 15.....10.15 am Holy Spirit

Sunday January 22.....10.15 am St John's

Sunday January 29.....10.15 am Holy Spirit

Sunday February 5.....10.15 am St John's (Commissioning)

OVERHEARD AT THE MAGI CLUB



Last Month – December

Saturday 24th Christmas Eve: 5 pm Children's Carols at St Johns; 11 pm Midnight Service at St John's
Luke 2:6-7; 1 Peter 1:1-12

Sunday 25th Christmas Day: 9 am Holy Spirit; 10.15 am St John's
Matthew 2:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

This Month – January

Sunday 1st Christmas 1, Circumcision: 10.15 am Holy Spirit
Matthew 1:1-17; Romans 4:13-25

Friday 6th Epiphany

Sunday 8th Epiphany 1: 10.15 am St John's
Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Matthew 3:13-17

Sunday 15th Epiphany 2: 10.15 am Holy Spirit
Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11; John 1:29-42a

Sunday 22nd Epiphany 3: 10.15 am St John's
Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1-9(10-14); Matthew 4:12-25

Sunday 29th Epiphany 4: 10.15 am Holy Spirit
Micah 6:1-8; Psalm 15; Matthew 5:1-12

Money: November

Income:	Giving:	\$7,621.00
	Gift Day:	\$4,120.00
	Other:	\$17,707.57
	Total:	\$29,448.57

Expenses:	\$31,570.42
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Deficit:	\$2,121.85
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Normal giving was down, but donations continued to come in from the Gift Day appeal, thank you.

Holy Spirit Mothers' Union (60th Year)

The last MU meeting for 2022 was held on Wednesday 30th November at 10 am. We had our meeting outside in our back garden: it was a beautiful sunny morning. We all took part in the service, with songs from *Covenant Songs* 37 and 104. Coral read the Bible about the Christmas Message.

Elsie handed out our MU report for 2022. Beth gave the Treasurer's report. MU/Caritas Altona Group packed the Christmas cards for the Women's Remand Centres (three in a pack) and the MU Chaplain will deliver them.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 25th January 2023. The meeting closed with Midday Prayers. We packed away outside, then had lunch at Watsonia RSL with members and friends.

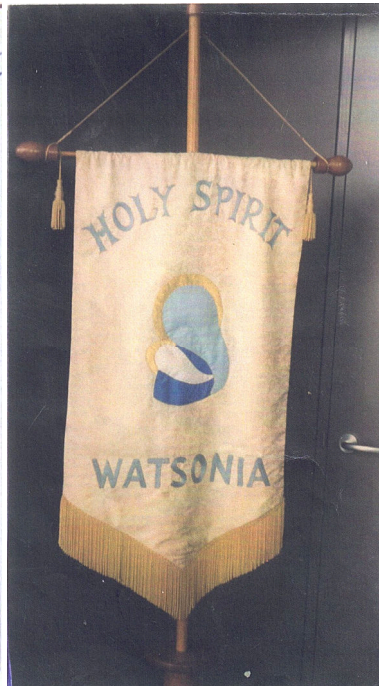
Elsie Storr

The H.S. Mothers' Union Banner

Our Banner was first made for Holy Spirit Watsonia GFS. The preparation—buying material, design, and most of the hand embroidery—was worked by our church organist, Betty Cummings, and her mother Mrs Green. Because of other commitments with music and Sunday School, Betty handed the banner to Elsie Storr for completion, with her husband John making the brass fittings and the woodwork. After the GFS discontinued, the banner was stored in a church cupboard, until Rev'd Peter Omond found it and suggested to alter it to a MU banner. Our then president, Margaret Polglase, and Eve Beck designed an emblem, based on the Mother and Child. Elsie Storr did the padding and embroidery on the banner, with the MU emblem on the back. Alan Jones made the wooden stand so our banner could be displayed in our church. The age of the banner could be 38 years? Mothers' Union 27 years?

Special thanks to Betty Cummings for her useful summaries.

Elsie Storr, Secretary Holy Spirit MU, 15th February 2009



Left: Holy Spirit Watsonia Girls' Friendly Society; centre: the banner front after alteration; right: the rear of the banner

mainly music: January 2023

We had a super last session in early December with only one family absent. It made for a lot of children and, of course, a lot of excitement. The children had previously made angels (using paper plates) to hang on the tree and took these home. They were also given a candy cane, doctored to hang on the tree as a letter J – for Jesus plus a whole bag of goodies. The families were each given a book with the story of Christmas.

With the absence of lockdowns everyone has appreciated being able to attend every week, unless they themselves are sick, and the relaxing of some of our more stringent rules. More rules will be relaxed next year with probably the Lycra coming back among other possibilities. We will still continue to give each family a bag with props for the year which will cut down our cleaning to just the toys each term and the props once a year.

Rosemary Bellair (9459 5394)

Last service at St Andrew's

On 11th December, the Third Sunday in Advent, the last service was held at St Andrew's. *'Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees'*, proclaimed Denise, quoting Isaiah 35:3-4. *'Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God."*

After the prayer for Advent 3, we sang *O worship the King*, and the third Advent candle was lit in a stand that would not see the fourth.

There followed the Prayer of Preparation, Confession and Absolution, then Jonathan led us in Psalm 146.

Denise and Jonathan were wearing red stoles in honour of St Andrew, and at the suggestion of Syd Simpson, who was playing the organ for the last time, we sang *Jesus calls us o'er the tumult* in honour of the calling of St Andrew, and of us.

Denise now said, 'St Andrew's has been a place that has been a faithful proclamation place of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ for over a hundred years, and people here have worshipped in this place, and other places as well, for many, many years; and so . . . in an attitude of giving thanks to God for the ministry that occurred to you in this place, there's an option now if anybody would like to come and share a few words . . . as a time of encouragement to hear the things that have happened for you in your life through the ministry of this place'.

Many people took up this offer, and this is some of what they said (apologies for misspelt names):

Geoff Smith

I speak informally on behalf of a group of about 15 or 20 young people here today who were part of Saint Andrew's during the 1950s and 60s . . . All I want to do is to mention some names who were important to us who played a great part . . . These are some of the people who meant so much to us, and showed us God's love during the period that we were active at St Andrew's. I start with Jack and Mavis Viccars, Connie and Fred Balaam, Muriel Evenden, Betty and Ern Mitchell, Ted and Bidy Colvin, Eric and Joan Carter, Eric and Gwen Constable. To these people we give our thanks: they will always be in our memory. I'm sure there are other names and you can mention them in your heart and thank God for them.

I want to finish on a personal note. Alan Baker, my good friend, and I came to this kindergarten at Saint Andrew's 80 years ago—I'm getting all emotional. Even today we speak of another name: Bonnie Saunders. She was our teacher. We know little about her, but to this day we remember and speak of her, and she showed God's love to us in a fashion that started off on our road at St Andrew's. So to Bonnie Saunders we say, 'Thank you' . . . She exemplified what St Andrew's was all about: a loving, caring, God-filled community. Thank you, St Andrew's.

Pang Chai

I came to this parish more than 55 years ago, and it changed my life; and I want to pay tribute to a number of people . . . Mavis and Jack Viccars, because they took me in, and provided me with food and a roof over my head . . . during the time when I was here the White Australia Policy was still alive and well, but people here in this parish embraced me as one of their own. We went to Fellowship with Jack and Mavis Viccars. I married one of the Colvins' daughters, and my family is now a flourishing community of the Australian landscape. So I say thank you to the people of St Andrew's for giving me a chance, and my life has changed completely. And therefore racism is not something we need for the future . . . and thank you.

Beth Ireland

I'd like to read you just a little bit of what I said at the 100th anniversary . . .

My first service at St Andrew's Church of England was in 1959 with our eight-month-old daughter Jenny. We were warmly welcomed that day by Roma and Alan Wilson. Roma became a good friend and inspiration to me. Phil Cooke was the minister and we worshipped in the little wooden church on the corner.

Our second daughter Sue was baptised there; Eric Constable was now the minister. We joined in the church family, attending special church functions, progressive dinners and concerts, and I was a member of Mothers' Union.

Services began in our new grey-brick in December 1962, where we continued to worship, now with our third daughter Cathy. I watched the old wooden church being demolished. Our three girls attended Sunday School, all were confirmed, and Jenny and Cathy were married at St Andrew's.

In 1973 David Horsford was our minister when we moved to Tasmania for Eddie's work. Returning after 2½ years we continued our worship and fellowship at St Andrew's. Ian Cameron followed David Horsford in 1979-2002.



The past 56 years have been a blessing to me: seeing three of our grandchildren,



Erin, Mark and Hannah Cox, part of the congregation until their late teens, the friends I've made and worked with on different rosters, church fêtes, Bible study groups and transporting; now Eddie and I are helping at Macleod Op Shop. These special people have all been a part of my social and spiritual journey.

One of my greatest joys was to join St Andrew's choir with my daughter Jenny, a very special time for us.

To the ministers, their wives and husbands, some for only a short stay, others quite long—I've counted 13, maybe more—I am grateful for their faithful leadership, their visits, and teaching of God's Word. To those who personally helped and encouraged me these past years, I will always be grateful.

Joan Hodgson

I first came to St Andrew's 10 years ago, and at that time my husband had become very ill; but I also was a member of Holy Spirit Watsonia where I had been for many years, but I'd made the big decision of coming to St Andrew's because at that time Watsonia met at Saturday night and I didn't want to be driving out at night on my own; and I decided that perhaps when things changed I would go back to Holy Spirit. But when I came to St Andrew's I found the love and friendship was absolutely wonderful, and they knew the reason I had come, so when things did change and my husband passed away, I made the big decision . . . and although a big part of me is still at Watsonia, I'm very pleased that I came to St Andrew's, because I will always remember the love and friendship that's been shown to me over the last 10 years.

Alison Bannon

My name's Alison Bannon; my maiden name was Beau. I grew up next door here next to St Andrew's in the 60s—remembering lots of different ministers here: Mr Horsford and Mr Cameron and even Mr Constable I think christened me. I joined the choir, had happy memories with the Sunday School and being



part of the church; but I also wanted to mention my mum and being part of the Mothers' Union group, and all the ladies that were part of the Mothers' Union group. Her name was Barbara Beau and she and Shirley Tucker went around a group called the Girls' Friendly Society back in the 60s or 70s, I think; and that was a wonderful organization which allowed all the kids to have sort of a youth group connected to the church. So yeah, Mum had a lot of comfort out of going to this church, and we had a lot of connections, obviously, because we were living right next door. So Dad used to mow the lawns, and we were part of all the church, and I'm looking at all the ladies that knew Mum. So I just want to acknowledge all the women that were doing wonderful work as part of the church—and the men obviously, but I saw what my mother did with that group, so just a little prayer for them today.

Russell Earnshaw

I first came here—it must be 65, 67 years ago, as a young man, and joined the Young Anglican Fellowship and the names mentioned had a big influence on me, especially Mavis and Jack Viccars: they became like my parents, and the church really was somewhere where I grew up. People like Geoff and Alan were people I looked up to, and I thank them for the friendship and the guidance that they gave me over the years; and I think back on Mr Cooke, who was here when I first came, and then Eric Constable, who became a good friend and also a mentor to me; and they've helped me in my wanders around the world over the years, and supported me; and I just thank you for all the prayers . . . people I don't recognise now, because they look a little bit different after sixty years or so, but thank you very much for your friendship and your prayers and I hope you continue to pray for me.

Rhonda Murphy

Geoff and I came to St Andrew's in 1975, just after we were married . . . and over the years we've brought up the family and [enjoyed] in that time the social activities and how St Andrew's contributed to the community: . . . like Mothers' Union, the Anglican Men's Society, the youth groups; . . . progressive dinners where we met at different people's houses and then eventually we just had them in the Fellowship Hall; and, mainly, the Fair; and all the rosters where everyone helped clean and now—and even Geoff yesterday mowed because the mower man hadn't come

so we tidied up as much as we could within a couple of hours . . . But the church Fair really brought in the whole community . . . we had outreach to everyone, and people came from everywhere, and they looked forward to our Fair every year and it really put us on the map, and we had wonderful times, with Mavis and Peter Lean doing the money, and Shawn Irvine, and there were Beth and Gwen and the Buckmasters with their stalls, and the Coomers, and we really had a great time there, working together—exhausted, but we raised a lot of money and . . . I'd just like to thank everyone at St Andrew's that has supported me over the years in what we've done. And also Joan when we had the concerts . . . it was just wonderful: we raised the money for the organ, we raised the money for the kitchen, and we worked hard and . . . now we've got to move on and a lot of us will just be able to have a bit of a rest and reflect on what we have done over the years. So I'd like to say thank you, and I hope I haven't gone over my two minutes.

Alan Marriner

I just want to briefly say—because I'm only a recent addition, really. We came in 2003 to Rosanna, and we came off and on here to St Andrew's, because it's so close, around the corner, to where we live; but we were connected with other churches and had involvements and connections. And then just in more recent times, particularly just prior to Covid . . . we started to come here on a regular basis and then basically this has been our church, because we've decided to come and evolve. Even though it's only such been such a small congregation, it's been such a blessing to us, and I want to thank the Lord for St Andrew's Church here. I really praise the Lord for this church and congregation, in this beautiful place that it is to worship, and come to.

And it may sound silly, but I still hope and pray that maybe God will provide Providence, and people will worship here again, and it won't go. Because I think it's so beautiful and lovely in the community, and I've had such good connections with people, and made such friendships and I just want to praise the Lord for the place and all that we have here.

Denise thanked everyone who contributed, then offered a prayer:

Our gracious God and loving heavenly Father, we thank you for the ministries that have happened here, for over a hundred years:

those things that have happened recently, those things that brought community together. We thank you, Father, most of all for your love, for the way that the good news of Jesus has been proclaimed from this place, in word and deed, over many years. And Father, we do give you thanks and praise for all the things that have been shared this morning; the community connections, the encouragements in faith, and the joy of working together in serving you. We pray these things in the name of our risen Lord Jesus. Amen.

Lilian Casey read the Gospel, Luke 1:26–38,46–55. Then Denise preached, and her sermon, on *Hope for the marginalised* can be found on pp 13–14.

We then said the Apostles' Creed, except for Denise, who said the Nicene Creed. The Editor then led prayers; he has been asked to include them here:

Lord, we give thanks and praise for over a century of teaching, worship and fellowship on this site.

We give thanks and praise for dedicated Sunday School teaching of generations of children, starting in the home of Mr & Mrs Mills in Lower Plenty Rd, then every Sunday afternoon (including holidays) in a little weatherboard building that was gradually enlarged, then in the red-brick Parish Hall, reaching a peak of 685 children and over 50 teachers, the largest Sunday School in the Diocese. We give thanks and praise for the teachers who gave their time and energy, the many others who helped, including at the annual multiple anniversary services, and the annual picnics at the beach by special train; and we give thanks and praise for the teaching passed on.

We give thanks and praise that the people of St John's Heidelberg planted this church here in 1915, looked after and nurtured it, until in 1957 it was able to look after itself and be a parish in its own right. We give thanks and praise that later, in a more difficult century, the people here, and in St John's and in Watsonia and Viewbank, decided to join together to form the Parish of Banyule.

We give thanks and praise for 107 years of worship: at first, dedicated Christians walking over the often-muddy paddocks with hurricane lamps in the evening, to worship you in the little weatherboard church; and, later, sixty years of worship in this building. We give thanks and praise for 107 years of prayer, 107 years of listening to your word in readings

and being taught in sermons, 107 years of praise and hymns and psalms. We give thanks and praise for 107 years of worshipful learning through following the Church Year, its fasts and festivals, and we remember especially Ian Buckmaster's remarkable decorations of the church for Harvest Festival.

We give thanks and praise for baptisms and weddings and funerals; for being a centre of life in the community, and a fount of grace; for breakfasts, lunches and dinners (and progressive dinners), for barbecues and gatherings and functions, for talks and lectures and stalls and fêtes and fairs. We give thanks and praise for the Christian men and women down the generations who met here, who were married here, whose children were baptised and confirmed here, whose funerals were held here, and the ashes of some lie in the Memorial Garden. We give thanks and praise for the kindergarten and playgroups of the young that ran for 64 years, first in the old church, then in the Parish Hall; and the more elderly mah-jong group that met in the Fellowship Hall.

We give thanks and praise for the many other groups that met here to support the church, to do good works, and to augment the worship: we give thanks and praise for the Vestries, the Ladies' Guild and Ladies' Auxiliary, the Missionary Auxiliary and Medical Missions Auxiliary, 72 years of the Mothers' Union, and also its Telephone Prayer Ministry, the Anglican Men's Society from 1957, the 'Tuesday Evening Young People's Meeting', the Young People's Group, the Young Anglican Fellowship, the GFS and CEBS and over half a dozen other youth groups, the games nights, camps, car trials, concerts, revues, socials and dances; Caritas and Anglicare, the Bible study groups, the working bees, and the many, many committees. We give thanks and praise for the volunteers who worked in the op shop in Macleod, and in *mainly music*. We give thanks and praise for the choir members and organists and musicians. We give thanks and praise for churchwardens, and those who helped organise things, cook food, fix things, make tea, run things,

mow and work in the garden, buy things, paint things, make slices and scones and asparagus sandwiches and so much more.

We give thanks and praise for the ministers who have been shepherds to the people here at St Andrew's: the clergy of St John's, who provided oversight and took some services; Honorary Lay Reader Horace J. Hannah, who took most of the services until 1940; the curates who specially shepherded St Andrew's after that: Clifford Nash, Richard Pidgeon, Albert Haley, Lindsay Pace, Albert Strickland, Phil Cooke, and Phil Adkins; the vicars of St Andrew's parish: Phil Cooke, Eric Constable, David Horsford, & Ian Cameron; the vicars of Banyule: Peta Sherlock, Donald Bellamy, Philip Trowse, and Denise Nicholls; and the very many other curates, assistants, locums and student ministers who have been here over the years.

We give thanks and praise for the other former churches that have been especially associated with St Andrew's: for St Stephen's Viewbank; for the Church of the Ascension Macleod; and for St Philip's West Heidelberg. We give thanks and praise for the Parish of Banyule, which will continue, and will continue to look after this site.

We give thanks and praise, Lord, for the people of St Andrew's across the years; and for those that are with us still, we pray that you will comfort them in their grieving, uphold them in their faith, strengthen them in hope, and lighten their path ahead as they continue in your service.

As this church has always done, we pray for our world, for wisdom and compassion for those in positions of power and those who make decisions and judgements, especially bringing before you our newly elected State Government. You who scatter the proud, who bring down rulers, send your cleansing Spirit upon the world and its politicians. You who lift up the humble, uphold the peacemakers and those who seek righteousness.

And as this church has always done, we pray for those in need: the poor, the persecuted, the sick, the homeless, refugees, the unemployed, the overworked, prisoners, those

in chains of addiction or despair or sin, those who are struggling. You who send the rich away empty but fill the hungry with good things, give these people what they need, and give strength and energy to doctors, nurses, social workers, and all who help.

We especially remember those in our parish living in care homes: *Margaret Billett, Marge Allen, Audrey Brockfield, John Clarke, Eddie Ireland, and Ian Buckmaster*; and those who are unwell: *Joyce Gough, Betty Cummings, Jim & Maureen Shand, Pauline & Ted Holbery, Ann O'Toole, Eileen Broadway, David Young, and Margaret & Keith Lee*. We pray for others we know also to be in need, whom we now silently name before you.

We remember with thankfulness all the people of this holy place of St Andrew's who have run their race and now rest in your love. Comfort those who mourn loss, and comfort us here. Give us your sure hope for the future, knowing that, however unexpected, no word of yours will ever fail.

Lord, in your mercy,
Hear our prayer

We continued into the Lord's Prayer.

We sang *Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, then had Holy Communion.*



After Communion, we sang *God gives us a future*, got an Advent blessing, and finished the service with a prodigious morning tea, echoing 107 years of hospitality at St Andrew's.

The Editor left Syd Simpson piling up Geoff Hosking's innumerable organ music booklets, and wondering how they could be put to good use.



PREVIOUS INCUMBENTS



BUILT THE TOWER



INSTALLED GAS LIGHTING



MAGNIFICENT BEARD



FOUNDED THE SCHOOL



DID WONDERS FOR THE ROSES



NAME ON A PLAQUE



LARGELY ABSENT



INTRODUCED INNOVATIONS



ABOLISHED INNOVATIONS



LEFT UNDER A CLOUD



WROTE A BOOK



BUILT CHURCH ON NEW ESTATE



DAY OFF: FRIDAY



UPSET THE FLOWER ARRANGERS



PUB OUTREACH MINISTRY



BEFRIENDED THE METHODISTS



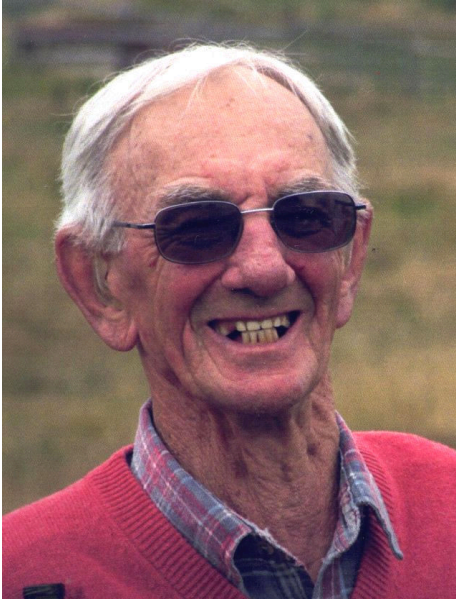
STARTED THE FOOD BANK



KEPT THE PLACE GOING

Peter Lean

16 January 1929 – 20 October 2022



Peter Lean was Mavis' husband and well known at St Andrew's whenever there was work to be done.

Peter's eulogy was given by his daughter Janet Cahill:

PETER'S STORY

Born in Adelaide on 16 January 1929, Dad was the first born to Maude Alexandra Ethel Lean and Harold William Lean. He had two younger brothers: John, who was born in Port Pirie and Robert, who was born in Melbourne.

Dad's early years of schooling were spent at Ivanhoe Primary School before they moved to Wynyard for a short time, and then settling in Burnie, Tasmania, where his father was lucky to secure a job at the Burnie Paper Mill. These were very difficult times, due to the depression years, and jobs were not easy to find. Dad left school after grade 7. He had numerous jobs, working in a butcher shop for a short period, and then securing his first job at APPM in Burnie as a 'Messenger Boy' in their Accounts Department on a salary of £1 per week from 1944 to 1945. He was then offered a position at W. Holyman & Sons as a Shipping & Airlines Clerk and worked for them for two years before joining the Hobart Savings Bank in Burnie for a short time.

During this time Dad had many interests including track running, tennis and social dancing, but his favourite was when he became interested in playing the drums and he joined the Burnie Highland Pipe Band. They played state-wide in various events for many years. These were especially fun times for Dad and he often spoke of the fun and mischief the band got up to. Band members were always invited back to Dad's place after practice, which was usually after 10 pm, where his mother would provide supper of freshly baked scones, jam and cream. The cream was a real treat in those years of the depression, and so were the bottles of beer belonging to his father!!! The highlight of his time in the Pipe Band, though, was when he was given the honour of Drum Major, and leading the parade before the Queen when she visited Burnie in 1953. Leading the Band for the Queen's tour through the streets of

Burnie was a great honour for Dad and one he was very proud of. The story goes though, that Dad led the band down the wrong street, though he strongly disputes this!!!!

Dad also worked for the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau and it was during this time that he met the love of his life, Mavis, at the local dance held at the hall at Burnie High School, though soon after he was offered a transfer to Sydney for 12 months. He told us this was a very enjoyable time as he was young and it was the first time away on his own, *and* he was staying at a boarding house at the Rocks! Though we were never told details of those stories!! Can't imagine why??? Just that it was lots of fun!

But he was smitten and devoted to Mum, and on his return, they became engaged and married a year later. A marriage withstanding the test of time, always supporting each other through good times and bad times, with them celebrating 71 years of marriage this month. His love for Mum was most evident especially in the latter years when Mum visited him at Strathalan, especially when she left, and he was saying goodbye. Whenever Barry and I visited, his major concern was always for Mum, and how she was managing at home.

They built their first home in Old Surrey Road, Emu Heights, Tasmania, where their first daughter, Judith was born in 1953. Dad was then offered a position back at APPM. This job led to a transfer to Head Office in Collins Street, Melbourne and they moved to Rosanna in 1954 where I was born a year later. Dad went on to work for a paper merchant, Edwards Dunlop, in Collins Street and he stayed with them up to his retirement at the age of 60. He kept in touch with his 'Old Buffers' as he called them, and was a regular at their annual 'Papyrus Club' luncheons right up until 2018 when it became too difficult for him to attend.

Their home in Douglas Street, Rosanna was originally a 'No Through Road' and had a creek running beside the property. I remember us having lots of fun playing in that creek and growing up there. I also remember lots of parties in that house, with Dad being a bit of a party animal. He was known to enjoy a drink or two, or three!!

Mum and Dad lived there for 42 years before the local Council offered to buy the property, as it was required for a car park for the Library. They then moved to Philippa Court, Viewbank, where they spent the next 26 years.

Dad loved helping people whenever he could. He was a member of the Apex Club in Burnie, and although not a swimmer(!), he was very actively involved in the construction of the swimming pool at the Burnie Beach. He would help many a neighbour with bins or collection of mail, and he participated in many working bees at St Andrew's Church in Rosanna where Mum practised her faith, and was a regular helping out at their Spring Fêtes and street stalls. For many years Dad volunteered at the Lang Lang Rodeo where he and his mates helped raise funds for the Westernport Memorial Hospital in Koo Wee Rup, for which he was awarded an Honorary Life Governor of the Hospital in 1968. Dad also volunteered at a centre in Ivanhoe called 'Open House' supporting teenagers and young adults. He thoroughly enjoyed this time helping others.

Dad loved his family and was very proud when his first grandchild, Robert, was born in

1979. He loved being a grandfather and was affectionately known as 'Poppa' to all his 7 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren.

You love all your grandchildren and I know Robert, Alan and Leanne absolutely adore you and love being in your company. Your love for their partners too, is equally felt. When your first 'great' grandchild, Jesse, was born it was even more evident the love you had for him, and for each and every one that followed. Leanne loved it when she would visit Nanna and Poppa every Tuesday and Poppa would take Jesse outside and sit under the carport and keep Jesse entertained while Leanne had a little lie down. I know they are very special memories for Leanne. All your grandchildren and great grandchildren love you and you have such a special relationship with each one of them, making them feel so very special and loved. And you would give them 'the top brick off the chimney' if they wanted it!

Dad was always there whenever we needed him and so many times, along with Mum, helped me with the kids growing up, whether it be baby sitting or picking them up from school or taking them to appointments or simply playing taxi for them. It was never any trouble for him. All the times you watched Robert and Alan play football for Heidelberg Footy Club were very special times and lots of fun. You were their biggest (and dare I say, loudest!) fan. They absolutely loved having you there each Saturday, and the yummy sandwiches Mum always had for you too. Though I don't think you got to eat too many of them, as you always offered them to all the players!

I will never forget all the trips to Kinglake and the endless help you and Mum gave Barry and I in cleaning up the property when we first bought it. All the bonfires we had, and all the BBQs we had are very special memories for me. And even to this day, every time I pick up a stick or branch in the paddock, I always think of you and the number of sticks you must have cleaned up over the years! Both at Heathcote and Kinglake.

Christmas was always a special time. Even when we were growing up, he loved the food, the drink but especially time with his family. At the end of lunch, things would quieten down and then we would realise—Dad was missing! But we always knew where to look for him—it was usually under a table or in a chair in a quiet spot, having '40 winks'.

I think there is only one Christmas that I did not spend with both Mum and Dad, but even then, we had an early Christmas at our place so we still felt like we had Christmas with you. They were very special times.

Dad had a wicked sense of humour as so many of us know!!! He loved a laugh, and loved making people laugh! Just the other day when I was talking to him about what he would like for his funeral, he said he just wanted a simple funeral service, and I said that we could do that for you, Dad, and perhaps we could all go to the pub after. Dad thought that was a lovely idea but he said 'Couldn't we go to the pub first'!

The staff at Strathalan always said they knew when Dad had visitors, as there was always lots of laughter coming from his room. They especially knew when Barry was there as the noise level rose even higher!!! And they would have the oxygen on standby. Dad loved those visits.

Dad loved to dance too, and would always take to the dance floor at any opportunity, his legs going in all directions!!! He certainly knew how to party and have a good time. I'm sure there are lots of memories and stories of these times, that so many people hold dear to them too.

Dad's other love, apart from Mum, was his property in Heathcote where he had much pleasure with his horse Trina, donkey Jenny, and his little grey Fergie. He would escape to Heathcote whenever he could and live in primitive conditions in his little tin shed. Freezing in winter and boiling in summer, but he loved every minute of it.

He also loved going to Tassie to visit his brother-in-law, George, and sister-in-law, Jan, on their dairy farm at Yolla. He loved farm life and loved getting his hands dirty, just not sure how much help he was, but he always came home looking relaxed and recharged. It was his escape, and I know there are lots of stories surrounding these times at the farm too! Some that can be shared and maybe some that are not so much for sharing!!!!

We all have so many wonderful memories and just so grateful for all the love and support you have shown to us all. You make us feel so special and loved and we will be eternally grateful for that love.

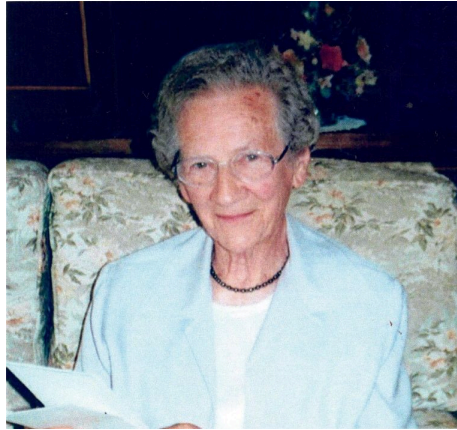
I feel very honoured to be his daughter and to have shared so many memorable times with him. Every birthday; and every special event; kid's graduations; and Deb Balls; Sporting Events; Weddings; he was there and always so very, very proud.

We were so very fortunate to have Dad for 93 years. He always said he hoped he would make it to three score years and ten! Well Dad, you made it to much more than that, and we are just so very pleased you did too, even though towards the latter stages it was not easy for you, but you always had a smile and a laugh for us right to the end. You have given us lots of happy memories and lots of laughs and those times will be treasured forever. Love you Dad.

'See you in the soup and we'll have a pea together.'

Marjorie Joyce Allen

20 March 1924 – 15 December 2022



Marge and Steve Allen were very active members of St John's for many years. Steve Allen regrettably died on 18th April 2020 and his funeral on 24th April was reported in the June 2020 *Babble*.

Marge followed her husband on 15th December 2022, and the funeral was held at St John's on 21st December. Steve and Marge's children, Faye Pargetter and John Allen, presented the eulogies again, as they had for Steve. They also ensured that Marge's service was the same as Steve's, with the same hymns (*Praise, my soul, the King of heaven* and *Abide with me*) and the same readings (Psalm 23 and John 14:1-6).

Faye said:

REMEMBERING MUM

Mum lived a happy life to the full, with optimism and determination, with a resilience to face challenges, but above all with a love for her family. Her energy to embrace life was clear even from her early years to her last and final hurdle. Dad always said: "Marge had all the good ideas" and it was one of the many things he loved about her. To him and to us, the tune he played in his latter years every day on his mouth organ: "You are my sunshine..." epitomised her place.

Mum was 98 years old: she was born in South Melbourne, and started school at Eas-

tern Road Primary in South Melbourne, then to Middle Park Central and then to Reid's Business College. Her involvement in church began at St Luke's South Melbourne, and really church involvement would remain a significant part of her life. John, Joy and I well remember going to Violet Sunday at St Luke's where a service of Thanksgiving was a joyous occasion. (New clothes, oranges and violets, reunion, our inclusion, music and the wonderful spectacle, are all vivid in my memory). Mum's later involvement at St John's Heidelberg included being a Foundation member of the Ladies Evening Fellowship, Vestry, various rosters, BCA, and World Day of Prayer.

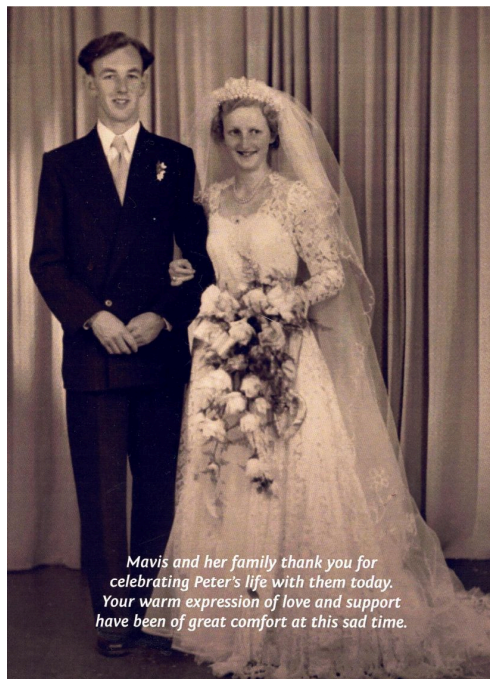
Mum and Dad met when they were 16 and they were married in 1946 at St Luke's South Melbourne when they were 22. Mum used to laugh at her father's response when he was consulted about their engagement, as his comment was he "Didn't like snap decisions". But this decision was to be an enduring lifelong combination — a loving, happy 'forever' relationship. Of course, the War had a huge impact on everyone, and not least mum. She worked as a volunteer at the Hut next to St Paul's Cathedral where it was a 'Drop-In' centre for soldiers on leave. Mum always worked, and I remember her as a volunteer in numerous different capacities as well as in various employments. She was always interested and active.

I have many memories of mum, but one that stands out is the many years she took me to calisthenics, and the great fun we had at South Street Competition in Ballarat every year where Clifton usually managed to do well.

Some memories of mum come to mind in a snapshot of events, and they are:

- Our happy family life in Eaglemont, where we moved in 1956.
- Mum and Dad's involvement in LATCH.
- Their five outback tours.
- Mum's volunteer work at Banyule Support and Information Centre.
- Our family holidays.
- When Mum and I went out together to the Australian Ballet season in Melbourne for many years.

Mum really enjoyed her family and was proud of them. I think she was well satisfied with a joyful and loving life within the framework of



Mavis and her family thank you for celebrating Peter's life with them today. Your warm expression of love and support have been of great comfort at this sad time.



shared goals and a supportive environment which she was instrumental in establishing. She was generous in many ways and made many good friends over her lifetime. Above all her partnership with Dad was enduring and we were blessed to have such a happy family.

Faye

And John said:

Mum always loved the family coming, especially for events like Christmas, Easter and birthdays.

We had many happy times as a family at these events.

Mum moved at high speed when doing most things. For example Mum would ask would you like a cup of coffee? Well it was poured before you could answer.

Mum had many talents: she would alter my pants whenever I asked, she made dresses for Natalie and Kate and even made bags for

me when I delivered the *Heidelberger* in the Eaglemont area when I was young.

I remember going to Violet Sunday at Saint Luke's South Melbourne. This day had significant meaning for Mum as it was part of her childhood. Mum had gone to Violet Sunday with her mother my Nanna. The family continued to go for many years.

Mum was a great organiser and loved being involved in whatever she could help with.

Mum worked as volunteer at Banyule Information Centre. She also was very active in Lady's fellowship and all Saint John's Church activities.

Mum was the first committee to build the tennis courts at Saint John's. It's a game I still play today thanks to Mum.

In her sermon, Denise pointed out that Marjorie had had a good long life, and that her deterioration did not stop

us loving her or grieving her passing, nor did it much matter to the Lord who knows our hearts. She spoke of Jesus as the Good Shepherd, gentle and caring and protecting. She contrasted the lack of room for Mary and Joseph with the many rooms in the Father's house, and we should trust God in the midst of grief and sadness.

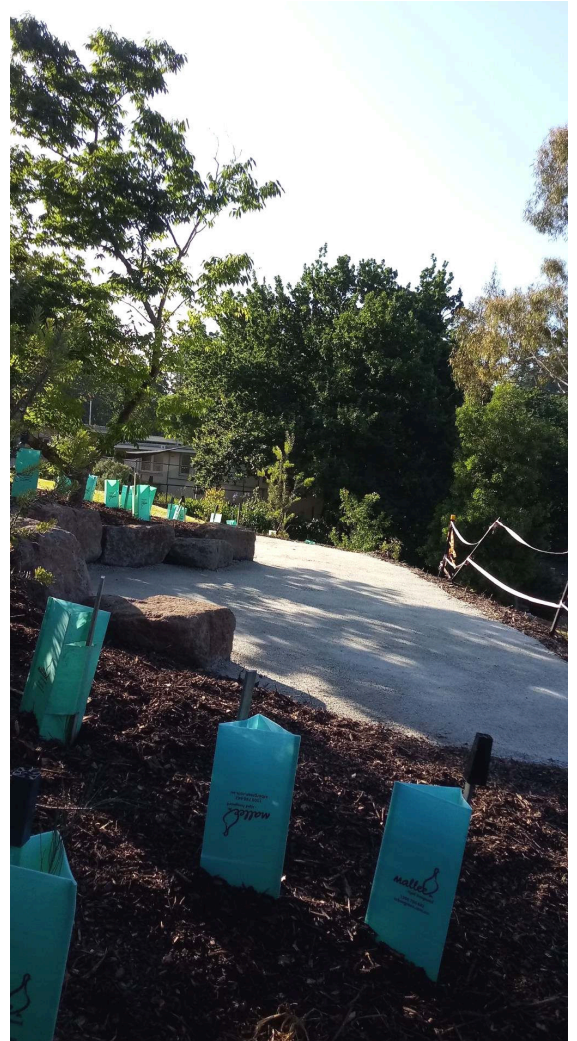
John Graham Clarke

We regret to record the death, in the early hours of Sunday 18th December, of the Rev'd John Clarke, Vicar of St John's 1978-1988.

The funeral will be held in late January to allow family members to come from overseas.

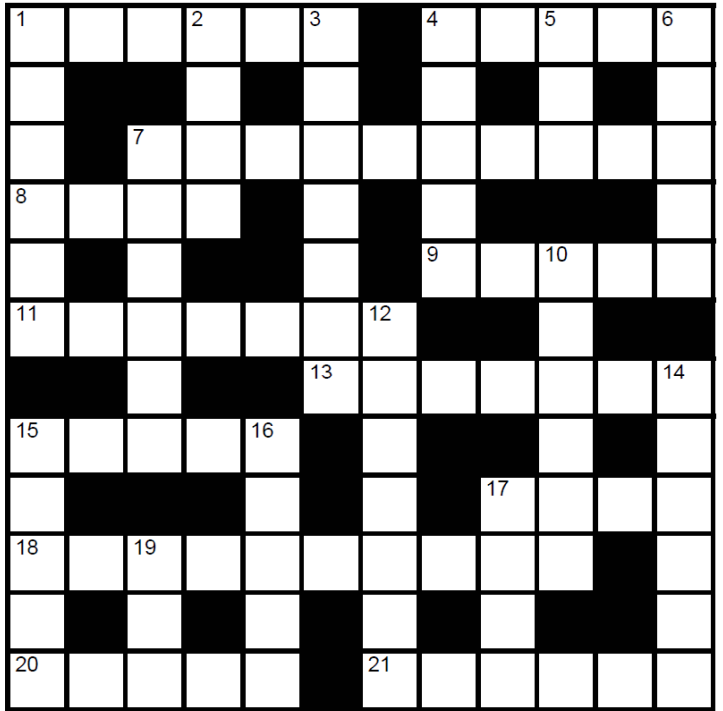
Beehive landscaping

Here are some photos of the landscaping done at the back of the church on the edge of the escarpments. Trees will soon be planted along the edge there. — *Katrina Philip*



Across

Down



- 1 Conflict (6)
- 4 Implement of war (5)
- 7 Forty years were spent here by Israel (10)
- 8 Watery downfall (4)
- 9 Consumed (5)
- 11 Testimony (7)
- 13 Sow (7)
- 15 Healed (5)
- 17 Tear (4)
- 18 Providential (10)
- 20 Humble (5)
- 21 Language (6)

- 1 Obtain temporarily (6)
- 2 Jacob, for example (4)
- 3 Eternal (7)
- 4 Attend (5)
- 5 First woman (3)
- 6 Resurrected (5)
- 7 Season (6)
- 10 Tenths (6)
- 12 Red (7)
- 14 Enigma (6)
- 15 Biblical transport (5)
- 16 Decomposition (5)
- 17 Destroy (4)
- 19 Uncooked (3)

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

by *Philologus*

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Unscramble the letters to find the words in our

Angels of the Bible Anagram



www.dltk-kids.com

- eeegmnrsss _____
- ceoprtt _____
- bdeeinot _____
- aeehnrv _____
- abefiltuu _____
- aceegnorrssu _____
- adhnosstu _____
- defilnry _____
- beiiilnsv _____
- bghirt _____

Bible Word Search – Jesus’ Birth

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_JesusBirth_0.htm

- Advent, Angel, Anointed, Augustus, Bethlehem, Betrothed,
- Caesar, Carpenter, Census, Christmas, Divine, Dream, East,
- Epiphany, Frankincense, Galilee, Gifts, Glory, Gold, Herod,
- Immanuel, Inn, Israel, Jerusalem, Joseph, Joy, Judea, Magi,
- Mary, Messiah, Myrrh, Nativity, Nazareth, Peace, Presents,
- Savior, Shepherds, Son, Star, Swaddling, Virgin, Worship, Yule

Answers to last month’s puzzles



Bible Word Search mystery answer:
LOVINGKINDNESS

Last month’s anagram:

- eimoprs _____ **promise**
- aeprry _____ **prayer**
- adensss _____ **sadness**
- aelmsu _____ **Samuel**
- bdeelss _____ **blessed**
- ehoprpt _____ **prophet**
- rsttu _____ **trust**
- abby _____ **baby**
- hioprs _____ **worship**
- aegv _____ **gave**

Advent 1: Hope for the future

27th November 2022

Isaiah 40:1–11; Mark 1:1–8

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

Isaiah 40:1–11

⁴⁰ Comfort, comfort my people,
says your God.

² 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.

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

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

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

⁶ 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.'

⁷ The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.
Surely the people are grass.

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

⁹ 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!'

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ 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

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

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

³ 'a voice of one calling in the wilderness,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'''

⁴ And so John the Baptist appeared in the
wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance
for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵ The whole Judean
countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went
out to him. Confessing their sins, they were bap-
tised by him in the River Jordan. ⁶ John wore
clothing made of camel's hair, with a leather belt
round his waist, and he ate locusts and wild
honey. ⁷ 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. ⁸ I baptise you with water, but he will
baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

Today we begin a series of sermons on the
theme of Hope, as we go through Advent,
and leading up to our celebration of Christ-
mas, we're focusing on different aspects of
Hope that are found in the Scriptures.

What do you hope for? Perhaps with the
election result yesterday your hopes were ful-
filled, or dashed. We hope for better weather,
better health, an end of war, a better outcome
in all areas of our life. Hope is defined as a
feeling of expectation and desire for a partic-
ular thing to happen.

But in the Scriptures, hope is a little dif-
ferent, because it has that expectation of ful-
filment as well. And 'hope' embraces 'trust'.

Hope in the Scriptures: what is our sure
and certain hope? It's not that optimism and
'the glass is half-full' attitude to life, but rather
it is in that attitude that no matter what is
happening in life, hope is always centred
upon the person and character of God.

So today, as we think about *hope for the
future*—how the prophets prophesied this hope
that would be fulfilled—we in the present con-
tinue to hope. For in the Scriptures, hope is in
God: God the eternal, the reliable, the ever-
loving Father. And of course we know that as
we approach Christmas and the Incarnation
of God's Son—as well as Advent, when we
remember that the Lord Jesus will return in
resurrection glory—our hope is always in him.

So today we are looking at a prophet
from the Old Testament, and a prophet from
the New Testament. And I only have one point
today: how hope is announced—how the prop-
hets call to God's people to have their hearts
and minds directed from God and towards
God: God who is their only hope of salvation.

So let's turn firstly to Isaiah. I am going
to make a few comments on this wonderful
passage. In Bible study this week it was hard
for us not to break out—in fact we did break
out—in song, singing little parts of *The Mes-
siah*, which are based upon this passage of
Scripture. In Isaiah chapter 40, in the midst of
suffering of God's people as they are going
into exile, comes a message of . . . comfort—
double comfort—*comfort, comfort* my people,
says the Lord: Isaiah chapter 40.

The message of comfort and hope comes
to the people of God from God, that he had
not forgotten them. And he had not forgotten
them because of his faithfulness, and God's
character; and that's why he can say, 'Comfort:
your time of distress is coming to an end'.

And the prophet proclaims the word of
the Lord. Verse 3: *A voice of one calling: 'In
the wilderness prepare the way for the LORD;
make straight in the desert a highway for our
God. Every valley shall be raised up, every
mountain and hill made low; the rough ground
shall become level, the rugged places a plain.'*
The prophet proclaims the word of the Lord:
a time is coming, and they are to prepare the
way—prepare for God coming to them. And
the way will be made easy for them: for God
to come, and for them to come to God. An
easy way, with barriers removed—that beau-
tiful image of mountains brought low and val-
leys raised up, to make sure that there's no
huffing and puffing up the mountain, but an
easy way to God.

And what will happen on that day? Verse 5:
*the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all
people will see it together.* Their hope is in God.

Then the prophet goes on to contrast the
frailty of humanity with the enduring, everlasting
God. For the voice is again told to cry out, '*All
people are like grass, and all their faithful-
ness is like the flowers of the field. The grass
wither and the flowers fall, because the breath*

of the LORD blows on them.' The frailty of
humanity is known in Scripture. It is lived out.
And we know that too, don't we? Our frailty:
that what we think when we're young—that
thirty is old and fifty is, you know, almost had
it—well, once we reach those ages we think,
'Woo-hoo! Just getting into my stride!'—but
we know that we will all come to an end of
our life. Our human bodies are frail.

And yet, what stands forever? Verse 8:
the word of our God endures for ever. See,
there's a contrast between God, who is endur-
ing and everlasting, and the frailty of humanity.

And so from verse 9, the prophet directs
the people towards their only hope. What is
the hope? What is the promise through the
prophet? In verse 9 he is told to go and shout
this great news. What is this good news?
'*Here is your God!*' God will come to rule, and
he rules with a mighty arm, and with power.

It's that image of the everlasting, all-
powerful God; but also in this section there's
this wonderful image of God as comforter, as
gentle. Verse 11: *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.*

This week on some news channels and
on YouTube there was a wonderful story in a
zoo in Kansas, and how a chimpanzee mother
had to be taken very quickly to have a caesa-
rean to deliver her baby safely. The baby was
worked on, the mother was well, and after
two days she was let into her enclosure, and
on a little mattress, swaddled, was a little baby.
The mother looked in confusion until the baby
chimp's arm went up to her. Her response?
She ran and grabbed the baby and hugged it
to her chest, and rocked. She recognised her
little baby. Amazing! It brought tears to your
eyes.

The Scriptures say, yes, God rules with
a mighty arm and comes with power; but he
is the God of comfort, who tends his flock;
and we have this image of Israel, that's often
used in the Old Testament, as God being
their shepherd who gathers them, holds them
to his heart, and gently leads them. An image
of hope.

Well, when we turn to the New Testa-
ment, the Gospel writer Mark, as he is about
to speak of the Good News, we note from
verse 1 that he says three things about Jesus.
First he says his name; and that he is the
Messiah, the Son of God; and that the Good
News begins with the prophet: *as it is written
in Isaiah the prophet.* And then he quotes
from Isaiah, that we've just been looking at:
*Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight
paths for him.*

The Gospel writer Mark equates John the
Baptist with the promised forerunner of the
Messiah spoken of in Isaiah. And he says in
verse 4: *so John the Baptist appeared in the
wilderness.* John prepares the way for the com-
ing of God's promised Messiah. He preached
a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness
of sins, and verse 5 tells us *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.*

John, the prophet of the New Testament,
heralds the way for God's promised Messiah.
He urges people to turn their hearts back to
God, and calls them to undergo this ritual
washing of baptism.

And then we have this funny little verse about what John wore and what he ate. We might think, 'Well, why is that there?' Well, it's clear that from John's clothing and what he ate, the Gospel writers were harking back to another of God's Old Testament prophets: Elijah, the one who was fed by God through the ravens. Here, John is fed locusts and wild honey. Again, provided food by God, and making that connection with the great prophet Elijah. His dress mimicked that of Elijah, and it also distinguished him from the other religious leaders of the day: he was separating himself from them, and spending time in the desert, as did Elijah.

So here we have this little verse that tells us people were thinking he was like Elijah, who was always seen as the one who would go before the Messiah.

Well, it's not so much what he wears—that's an aside—or what he eats—that's also an aside—but his message, that is spoken of by Mark. *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. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'*

His message was against the wickedness of the day—yes; and turning people's hearts back to God—certainly; but his focus was on the one who was to come, the coming one, the Messiah, the one in whom, and through whom, their hope would be realised. The one who, by baptising with the Holy Spirit, ushers in the new age. The one in whom their hope is fulfilled.

John heralds the coming of Jesus, and the hope of all people, as the Messiah comes to the earth.

Hope—predicted by the prophets. Hope is based on the character and the person of God. Hope comes through the Lord Jesus Christ. As his people in this Advent, as we await his wonderful return in glory, and as we also approach our celebration of the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus at Christmas, we keep hoping in him.

This morning at St Andrew's Rosanna, Mavis Lean shared with me a little saying that she heard many years ago: that HOPE can be explained as *Holding On, Praying Expectantly*. Isn't that a helpful acronym?

But what I do know is that we keep hoping in the Lord Jesus. I love that hymn: 'My hope is built on nothing less'.

In Advent we look with hope to the coming of the Lord Jesus again in glory. And as we think about our hope, we see that our hope was prophesied by the prophets, speaking of the future that was to come. And for us, we know that it did come, through the Lord Jesus; and we look for his coming again. Keep hoping in him. Keep trusting in God, because it's not about us, it's about him—and God's love for us.

Let me pray: *Father God, as your Old Testament people prophesied the coming of the one who would see all hopes fulfilled, we give you thanks and praise that our hope resides in Christ: that he is the very hope of our salvation, and our justification, and our coming to be with you eternally. So, eternal God, we give you thanks and trust for the hope that you have placed in our hearts. Please keep it there by your Spirit, and fuel it with fire in love for you. Amen.*

Advent 2: Hope in confusion – Joseph

4th December 2022

Luke 2:1–5

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ² (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³ And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴ So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵ He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

Sermon by Helen McAlley at St Andrew's

PREGNANCY AND BIRTH ARE NOT EASY

I remember over 40 years ago now when I was expecting our fourth baby, Lucy. I would heave myself into the car to take my other three children to their various activities. One week I counted that I had done 20 trips and I felt quite sorry for myself!

When I went into labour, Peter took me to the clean, well-equipped hospital where I was to give birth. Compared to many women in the world at that time and throughout history, I was indeed fortunate. I recently read the edited diary of a pioneer in early Australia, Mary Mowle. She described the imminent birth of one of her babies as 'the dreaded ordeal'. So many women did not survive childbirth and Mary Mowle herself did not survive it. She died at the age of 30 soon after having her sixth child.

A BABY CONCEIVED OUT OF WEDLOCK

It was not easy either for Mary the mother of Jesus and for that matter Joseph when the time came for Mary to give birth to Jesus. They had had a few challenges during the pregnancy.

Firstly, Jesus was conceived before they were married and living together. We all know the wonderful story of how the angel Gabriel came to Mary and explained that she would bear a son who would be called Jesus which means 'God saves'. He was the promised Messiah and would save the people from their sins. And He would be conceived by the Holy Spirit as we say in the Creed. Mary told the angel that she was willing to do whatever the Lord had planned for her. The Lord had wonderful plans for her and it is important to remember that he has wonderful plans for each of us too. The Bible refers to these plans as 'good works that God prepared beforehand that we should do' (Ephesians 2:10). Are we, like Mary willing to be obedient in everything that the Lord shows us to do?

Mary was found to be expecting a baby out of wedlock. And maybe that was necessary. If she had been found to be pregnant after her marriage to Joseph it would easily have been thought that Jesus was Joseph's natural baby.

HOW WILL JOSEPH RESPOND?

Mary's pregnancy was a challenge to Joseph. The couple were betrothed which was a commitment even more binding than an engaged couple today, but they were not married or living together. They could only break off the betrothal by a divorce and Joseph resolved, when he realised that Mary was pregnant, that

he would 'divorce her quietly'. The evangelist Matthew describes Joseph as 'a righteous man...unwilling to expose (Mary) to public disgrace.' That public disgrace could actually include a woman and her partner being stoned to death according to the Law in Deuteronomy 22:23–24.

So Joseph had his plans to divorce Mary quietly, but before he could put this into effect, he also had a visit from an angel of the Lord who explained just who this baby was, a fulfilment of a prophecy in Isaiah 7.14 that a virgin would conceive and bear a son. Like Mary, Joseph was willing to be obedient to the Lord and he too is an example for us today.

ACTING WITH COMPASSION

There are lessons to be learned from Joseph's life. Firstly, he was a man of compassion. Before the angel visited him, he could have been very angry with Mary when he found out that she was pregnant, presumably to another man, but instead, he acted in a compassionate and thoughtful way towards her.

We too need to be compassionate, always seeking the good of the other person and remembering that we are not to judge others. We need to see the best rather than the worst in others and not presume they are acting in a vindictive way seeking to harm or inconvenience for us when they may have just made a mistake or been a bit thoughtless.

AN EXAMPLE

A few days ago, I arrived home to find that another car was in my allocated parking spot in the retirement village where I live. Was that driver deliberately parking there even though they knew it was my spot? I left a note on their windscreen explaining politely that they were in my spot and could they use a visitors' parking spot next time. The next morning, I in turn received a note at my front door. It read, 'Dear Helen, Apologies for parking in your car park yesterday. I thought it was visitor parking. Sorry! Glenn.' I was glad I had been polite and not too quick to judge. Sometimes we need to give the other person the benefit of the doubt as Joseph did with Mary.

GODLY DISCIPLINES

Joseph was a godly man, and in this, he is an example to us. I'm sure he would have had disciplines in his life of prayer, reading God's word, being obedient to God whenever he could and living in fellowship with other believers, and that those disciplines would have enabled him to act in a godly way when he was tested. If we too practise these disciplines, they will stand us in good stead when trials and difficulties come. Joseph was wise and able to do what the angel told him and I'm sure that action came from a life of discipline and the desire to please the Lord.

Not that Joseph was an older man. Joseph and Mary were probably teenagers because people married early in those days. I wonder if he came from a home where his parents made every effort to teach the faith to him. Can we too make every effort to teach the faith to our children and grandchildren?

THE CENSUS AND THE JOURNEY

Then there was the question of the census imposed by the Roman Emperor Augustus. Everyone had to go to the town of their ancestors and register there. Joseph and Mary were both descended from King David so they both had to make the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem where Jesus would be born.

The prophet Micah in Micah 5:2 had prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

What a journey it would have been. Joseph and Mary were not wealthy people. After Jesus was born they offered a sacrifice in the temple of two pigeons or doves. This was what poor people would offer to God if they could not bring a lamb according to Leviticus 12:7.

There is no mention in the Bible that Mary was taken to Bethlehem on a donkey. It is most probable that they walked the 150 kms from Nazareth to Bethlehem. It would have taken them at least a week and they would have gone through country where there were thieves and wild animals. They would have had to have carried provisions for the journey and all that they would need for their baby who was soon to be born. The Bible says that Mary brought swaddling cloths to wrap around the baby when He would be born. Then would they be able to find or afford accommodation for the nights of the journey? It would not have been an easy journey at all especially as Mary's baby was now due to be born. I thought I was badly off in my pregnancy with my daughter Lucy. How much harder would this journey have been for both Joseph and Mary? But when the emperor says you have to do something, you have to do it.

STRENGTH FOR EACH EXPERIENCE

I imagine that Joseph and Mary would have had to draw on God's strength and protection when they made that journey. And that is precisely what we have to do when we go through difficult times. We need to remind ourselves that the Lord will not tempt us beyond our strength, but with the temptation will provide a way of escape that we may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). As we practise trusting God in small things, He will give us the strength to cope with the more difficult experiences. Jesus did not promise that life would be easy, but He does promise His strength and help in every situation.

JOSEPH CARES FOR MARY

Joseph and Mary arrived in Bethlehem and Mary immediately went into labour. There was no room for them in the inn. The commentator Matthew Henry wonders if things would have been different if they had been wealthy people? Would room have been made for them then? Instead they were directed to a stable (or maybe a cave) where the animals found shelter. There Mary gave birth to the baby and He was wrapped in those swaddling cloths that Mary had brought with her from Nazareth, and laid in a manger – a feeding trough for the animals. Things were different then from what they are now. Then, a man would not be present at the birth of a baby. Maybe Joseph had to break this rule because there was no one else to be with Mary at that time. He would have provided her with support and encouragement. Later, on the instruction of the angel of the Lord, he would take his little family to Egypt to escape the cruelty of King Herod.

CONCLUSION

Joseph was a godly man. He sought to be obedient to God. He did not take Mary's pregnancy as a personal insult but resolved to treat her in a compassionate way. When he found out who the Baby was, he cared for Mary and obeyed God's instructions to protect her and the baby Jesus. His life was probably quite different from what he imagined it would

be. In his obedience to the Lord and in the way he cared for both Mary and Jesus, he is a powerful role model for us in our walk with the Lord and in our relationships.

PRAYER

Shall we pray: *Dear Lord, we thank you for the life of Joseph and especially for his role in caring for Mary and the baby Jesus. May we learn from his life to be obedient to you and caring and compassionate towards other. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Helen McAlley

Sermon by Jonathan Lopez

Intro

Today we continue the HOPE series in our Advent season series. Last week we looked at HOPE for the future through the prophets.

Q: Have you ever been promised something (hoped for something) and got something else you were not expecting?

You might think of those strange gifts we get at Christmas when we say 'you really shouldn't have': those gifts might come to mind.



Anyone get strange Christmas gifts? Or perhaps a birthday gift?

Kids, I am sure you'll get a strange gift once in a while. Don't be too disappointed.

As a kid I loved getting toys, so I would eye off gifts with my name and would see if they were box-shaped and I would be excited – I hoped it would be a Transformer or some other cool toy. I lost hope in good gifts when they were wrapped and soft and flimsy – we all know what gifts they are, right? BORING CLOTHES!

Strange and odd gifts can make us a bit CONFUSED as to the intended purpose of the gift. We might even HOPE that the strange gift is a 'prank/joke' gift and there is something better to come.

In this HOPE series we look at people in the Christmas story. Last week we heard the HOPE the prophets like Isaiah had of a king who would bring leadership and bring comfort to the world: Jesus the Prince of Peace would bring this about.

Today we look at the person of **Joseph**, Jesus' earthly father, who was GIFTED with marriage to Mary. He had a great HOPE for the future. *But this HOPE of marriage got a bit confusing when Joseph finds that Mary is already pregnant. But the turning point for Joseph was who this child was and who he would become – as proclaimed by a visit of an angel. (Matt 1:18–25)* Today we look at HOPE in CONFUSION.

Can we HOPE when we are confused?

When bad news breaks, when personal tragedy occurs, when we disappointed – the difference that followers of Jesus have is we **can** have HOPE in CONFUSION or some may say a HOPE BEYOND HOPE.

Part 1: HOPE in providence

In our very short 5 verses Joseph has gone to Bethlehem to register for a census that the Emperor Caesar Augustus (of Rome) was taking.

Most of us have done a census before, and as a country we just did one last year and the findings are all available. This is not the first time a 'census' is mentioned in the Bible, e.g. David did one (Ex 30): it was important to have a count of people he was leading. Why? Defence; people to recognise their connection to a country or region as a citizen; BUT also to pay their share of tax to help with general costs, and perhaps this is what this Emperor in our reading is doing.

Joseph's going to Bethlehem (which is known to be King David's ancestral home) confirms Jesus as one who comes from the throne of David (Luke 1:32): Luke makes it a point to mention Jesus' ties to David three times in just one chapter.

What significance does Bethlehem have? Well, Micah 5:2 tells us:

'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.'

The exact location of where God's chosen king would come from did come true.

POINT 1: Even in the midst of confusing situations, GOD is the one working out the details. That is called providence.

Joseph, though not much is known about him (he follows the law and is a carpenter) places his trust and hope in God's hands, who provides. Imagine Mary, who would have been eight months pregnant, and must journey possibly two weeks to Bethlehem.

APPLICATION: Unlike the world, who trust in their wealth, their intellect, we have a sure and confident HOPE in a God who will guide us even in our confusion. Isn't that amazing?

Share: As you all know, I don't come from an Anglican Church background, but I ended up studying in an Anglican Bible College, Ridley, to prepare to be a pastor. There were a number of times I felt God was drawing me out of the church I was in, in my second year of Bible college. *It was strange and confusing: why would God lead me to Bible college and then out of the church I had been at for 17 years?* I needed time to discern and ask God WHY? In this confusion I needed to trust God in the confusion.

Part 2: HOPE in context (political)

The other layer of confusion in our reading that we may not naturally pick up is, why is Luke detailing who the Emperor was at the time of Jesus' birth?

Going back to v 1, this Caesar Augustus is a man by the name of Octavian (yes they gave strange names back then—sounds like the evil villain in Spiderman). Well what is known about this Emperor is that he brought peace to the Roman empire for 200 years!

People called him: 'The divine saviour who has brought peace to the world'. Or 'The bearer of good news'. Some even called him 'The son of God'. That in this very context, Jesus is presented as Saviour, Lord, the one through whom peace comes to the world (2:11,14), this can hardly be accidental.

1. There is the world's version of peace
2. God's peace: *shalom* (Gk: εἰρήνη)

These are two very different things. The world may say: why? Isn't the absence of war and relatively 'conflict-free' times of history peace? But we know all too well that conflict and violence and aggression continue to affect our world continually. We look at the war in Ukraine, Myanmar, Syria and the countless other wars before these.

A good question to ponder is: **where does ultimate peace come from?**

As believers, we know the intention of God's created world in Genesis and the final destination is in Revelation.

I believe this is the idea Luke is pointing readers to see:

Who is really king?

Where does ultimate peace come from?

Do we place our hope in the Emperor, Prime Ministers, Presidents or God?

Conclusion:

At the community of St Anselm we would sing these verses just prior to the Gospel reading everyday. This is called *Benedictus* (the song of Zechariah: John the Baptist's Dad).. NO, I am not going to sing it...

But the last two verses in it say:

⁷⁸ because of the tender mercy of our God,
(the dawn from on high will break upon us,) or the pew Bibles say: 'by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven'

⁷⁹ to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the path of peace.'

Though the *Benedictus* is a song by a joyful father who is gifted with a son (John the Baptist) it speaks of lives turning to the **HOPE** in darkness, in confusion, a hope that will guide our feet into the path of peace.

In a confusing world that sees peace differently, in a world where COVID has caused so much confusion, and even now causes confusion, with many changes that affect all of us, like John the Baptist, like Joseph, we point to Jesus as the prince over confusion who brings God's *ultimate* peace into our lives.

In confusion may we all continue to point to Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. He is our peace in confusion.



Advent 3: Hope for the marginalised

11th December 2022

Luke 1:26–38, 46–55

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

²⁶ In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, ²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ The angel went to her and said, 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.'

²⁹ Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. ³⁰ But the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favour with God.'

³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. ³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, ³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants for ever; his kingdom will never end.'

³⁴ 'How will this be,' Mary asked the angel, 'since I am a virgin?'

³⁵ The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. ³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. ³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail.'

³⁸ 'I am the Lord's servant,' Mary answered. 'May your word to me be fulfilled.' Then the angel left her.

...

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

'My soul glorifies the Lord
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their
inmost thoughts.

⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.

⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.

⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful

⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants for ever,
just as he promised our ancestors.'

Today, as we continue on in our series of Advent, looking at the idea of Hope, today we're looking at *hope for the marginalised*. Who is the message of hope for?

I wonder if you can think about who are the marginalised people in our society—those people who live on the margins, or are pushed to the margins. Sometimes it might be those who are homeless; those who are refugees; indigenous people; the aged; the poor; those with an intellectual disability. Who is this Christian message of hope for?

Well as we consider our own Anglican church, and even us gathered here today, we might think that this message of hope is for people like us: middle-aged, white people—

people with English as our first, or perhaps only, language. But who is the message of hope for? God is the great God of Reversal, and today we know that hope is for everyone, including those who are marginalised.

Mary was a great servant of God. God decides to send a messenger, an angel—remember the word 'angel' means 'messenger', and we know this messenger's name, Gabriel—to . . . a young woman. Here we see God, who is the God of Reversal: the great God who turns things upside down, as we said in our Psalm today—not just the high and mighty in the world, but those who are on the margins, or who are lowly, or humble. The God of Reversal who sends his messenger to a little backwater town in the Roman Empire, Nazareth in Galilee. Not just to a backwater town, but to someone who is a young woman: one of the least powerful people in society at that time.

And the message that comes to her is a startling one: 'Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you.' I think Mary's response of being 'greatly troubled', as Luke records for us, reminds us that she knew who she was. She knew she was just one of many young women, living a very non-descript life, a very ordinary life; and yet she's greeted as 'highly favoured'.

Perhaps she thought, maybe God has the wrong person. Maybe the angel's looking for Mary down the road, who comes from a much more high-to-do family.

She was troubled; and yet what does the angel say to her? 'Do not be afraid, Mary'—he calls her by name. And he says to her, 'You will conceive . . . and even Elizabeth your relative . . . she who was said to be unable to conceive—or barren in the old terminology—is in her sixth month'. A shocking message, that God's Messiah, the promised one, who would be called the Son of the Most High, who would occupy the throne of King David in the line of Jacob, and whose kingdom would never end, would be born to her.

Now Mary rightly asks, 'How will this be, since I'm a virgin?' Yes, betrothed: a very important ceremony in ancient Jewish time, and so regarded as now in a marriage-type relationship; but the marriage had not yet occurred. 'How can this be?' says Mary. And the angel assures her that this will be the power of God, the Holy Spirit, the Most High. The Son of God will be born to you through God's miraculous intervention: as he had intervened for Elizabeth, and she who was old and in shame—because it was a shame, back then, for women not to be able to bear a child—she was certainly marginalised; and yet she was to bear a child. And note what the angel says: 'No word from God will ever fail'.

Mary's response: one of trust in her God. 'I am the Lord's servant'—or that lovely old-fashioned word, 'handmaiden'—'May your word to me be fulfilled'. Then the angel left her.

And then we move to the Magnificat, where we see how God gives hope to the marginalised. This beautiful song of praise of Mary—she's a great example of those who are marginalised, the powerless, the least of regard in society. Isn't that like God? What humanity devalues, God revalues. And he chooses her to bear the Christ-child.

It was a scary time for Mary. We know that as an unmarried young woman, pregnant,

she faced the prospect of divorce from her intended, Joseph. She could have become an object of derision, scandal and gossip. And yet God again turns things upside down, and from Mary's lips she can say *from now on all generations will call me blessed*. Fearful, knowing she was going to fall pregnant in an extraordinary way, facing difficulty; and yet she said she knows through the Holy Spirit that she will be called blessed. She recounts her song of praise, and gives absolute praise to God. She says, *'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour, . . . holy is his name'*.

She goes on to speak of God's mercy: how he has been merciful to those—and all those—who honour and fear God. And this extends not just to her, but to every generation. As God has always been faithful, so God will continue to be faithful. The high and the proud he will scatter and bring low; and yet the humble he will lift up: humble, not just in circumstances, but in attitude towards God.

This upside-downness of how God treats and what he values, is shown in how the poor and the hungry God will fill up, and yet the rich will be sent empty away. At the moment, even though we're in Advent, many of us have our Christmas trees up. I haven't put mine up yet: I might do it this week. But we see all the ads on telly. I usually love the Aldi ads. I haven't seen many good Aldi ads yet, but there are a couple of great ads where a young woman comes in, and she's looking for her place at the table, but the table extends, and extends, and it goes over hill and dale and it's massive! Isn't that a wonderful picture of what the kingdom of God is like! Even though this is an ad for Coles, I think, and food—but for me I thought, this is the welcome that is there for all people who trust in God. Tables laden with good food!

That's the image we've got here, where God has filled the hungry with good things. Not the dregs, not the leftovers, not the bits of food that were going to be chucked out at Coles but get recycled. The good food goes to the poor, and humble, and hungry, and this is from God.

And this will go to God's people and his descendants forever. As Mary says, *God has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham—the patriarch—and his descendants for ever, just as he promised his ancestors*.

Who is this message, this Christian message, of Advent hope for? Of Christmas hope for? It is for all. For those who are the marginalised in society: someone like Mary, all the people who are mentioned here: the poor, the lonely, those who struggle with life. For the Christian message isn't that we have to have it all together, is it? The message that's been preached in this church for over a hundred years is the good news of hope for all people who trust in God. For we trust not in ourselves, but in the Lord Jesus Christ, and his intervention in history for all of us: his death, and mighty resurrection, and of course in Advent we remind ourselves—as we do each time we say the Creed—that he is coming again.

Who is the message of hope for? It is the hope for all people who will trust in the Lord Jesus. This is the good news of Hope for all people. Amen.

Advent 4: Hope in the ordinary – the shepherds

18th December 2022

Luke 2:8–20

Sermon by Rachael Lopez

⁸ And there were shepherds living out in the fields near by, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.'

¹⁵ When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.'

¹⁶ So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷ When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸ and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹ But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰ The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

One thing I love about this time of year, apart from singing carols and eating ice-cream plum pudding, is cheesy Christmas movies. And I saw this Christmas Movie Plot Generator that shows just how similar all the storylines are.

Whether that is as a lawyer, a pastry chef or an artist.

You may not know that I grew up in the little town of Koroit between Warrnambool and Port Fairy. When my sister Amy was 17, she moved to London. When Rebecca was 18 she moved to Canberra and then London at age 21. My sister Bethany and I found ourselves in Melbourne. Life revolved around big church – we had church activities on 5 or 6 nights a week. I was studying at the Victorian College of the Arts and dreamed of being an artist. Ordinary was not an option for me.

You might have heard about James Rebanks, a shepherd in the Lakes District of England. He has a big following on social media and has written a fascinating account called *The Shepherd's Life* which was a Sunday Times bestseller. He talks about the modern industrial communities being obsessed with the importance of 'going somewhere' and 'doing something with your life'. He says "The implication is an idea I have come to hate, that staying local doing physical work doesn't count for much." He went to Oxford University and hated it, though I imagine his education helped him write two bestselling books.



When we look at the story of the shepherds in Luke's account of the gospel, we may wonder, why they were chosen to receive the announcement of the most anticipated birth in the history of humankind.

Hallmark Christmas Movie Plot Generator

choose one from each column

Dist. by Universal Uclick © John Atkinson, Wrong Hands

big city	lawyer	returns to her small town at Christmas time	to inherit something	and magically falls in love	with a sensitive guy in plaid
career-oriented	writer		to enter a folksy contest		with an old flame
recently single	baker		to stop some corporate closure		with some guy and his dog
world weary	interior designer		to save the family business		with a single dad and his precocious child
with the wrong guy	early 2000s actor you forgot about		to appease their sassy friend or widowed parent		with Christmas, the town and some guy

...and also the only old man in town might actually be the real Santa Claus.

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One I recently watched was about a big city aspiring painter in the wrong job returns to her small town at Christmas to appease their family and magically falls in love with an old flame.

But why do the characters in these stories leave their small town in the first place? There is the yearning to make it in the big city.

As I go through this text, I will be busting a few "myths" or at the very least implying that perhaps *some of the details have been created over time through songs and legends – rather than through the Bible or history*.

For example, some people see the idea of the shepherds being outcasts as an urban legend! That if the shepherds were societal

and religious outcasts... or poor and humble – that fits with the narrative of Jesus' birth being first revealed to the "least of these". If this was the case, then why was Moses a shepherd, David a shepherd, Jesus the Great shepherd, and obviously we get the words *pastor* and *pastoral* from this metaphor. Was the idea of shepherding a negative thing?

I think whether this idea is overstated, it is clear that the shepherds weren't high up in society, like Augustus and Quirinius mentioned in verses 1 and 2. The theme for today's sermon is Hope in the Ordinary – and that's more what I'll be bringing out ... the life of the shepherd was not necessarily outcast but it was ... ordinary.

James Rebanks in *The Shepherd's Life* writes: "Landscapes like ours were created by and survive through the efforts of nobodies. ... This is a landscape of modest hardworking people."

So what happened on this supposedly ordinary night for these shepherds? Why would adult shepherds be keeping watch at night? The only time sheep were watched at night by the shepherds was in Spring during lambing season, as ewes giving birth might require assistance. So, Jesus was probably born around mid-March. The darkness of the night they are experiencing is contrasted with the brilliance of light – from verse 9: "An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified."

So here they are – possibly helping ewes give birth – and they are given a different kind of birth announcement.

¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

One of the reasons why the story of the birth of Christ is so powerful is that it displays this "upside-down" world – where the Saviour-Messiah-Lord is wrapped in strips of cloth lying in a feeding trough. Now, the swaddling clothes point to Mary's maternal care of Jesus – as it is something any ancient Middle Eastern mother would have done for their new baby. There is nothing in the text that implies they were rags, though. It is the feeding trough that brings this understated element.

There's a part in Mary's song, often called the *Magnificat*, which Denise preached on last week: "He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly." There is a sense in which Jesus' "lowly" birth demonstrates this, but also the fact that the birth announcement was made to the shepherds – and then later it is women who first learn of Christ's resurrection. It was a society organised by status – and this is something in every culture – whether Eastern or Western, whether 2000 years ago or today. Some are more obvious than others – and it's often easier to point it out in the "other" than to look out our own society.

The birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ lifted up the lowly. It was for all, including ordinary folks like the Shepherds – who got to experience something extraordinary that night.

From verse 13:

¹³ Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

So these shepherds were terrified of one angel and were told – "do not be afraid." And then it goes from one angel to, in my mind, a huge angelic gospel choir. There's shining lights, it's all very dramatic. Not sure the shepherds were given much of a chance to calm down before it escalated. But, once the angels had descended into heaven, the shepherds are keen to go to Bethlehem. They are Jesus' first visitors *and* the first to spread the word about Jesus' birth, alongside Anna, an elderly widow and prophetess who lived in the temple.

Mary seems to have a more contemplative faith – she *"treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."* There is another time in the gospel of Luke that this phrase is used: Mary and Joseph found him talking to the teachers in the temple. They reprimanded him, and he answered. "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he was saying to them. Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart." Luke 2:49–51

So, what does this story teach us about hope in the ordinary?

My first experience of church as an adult was all about living an awesome life. I couldn't miss out on any church events because of what young people today call FOMO fear-of-missing-out. There was a focus on discovering your destiny or finding your calling. The question of "what do you do" was sheepishly answered if it was something ordinary. There were some plus sides to what I learned there – like the value of excellence and about dreaming big – these are things that have helped me even to this day. But there was something missing and it was the space between the exciting events. For me also, it was the space between the art shows and creative projects. Where was God in those spaces? Beneath all that was the fear... what if my life turns out to be ordinary?

Recently there's been a slew of books centred around this idea of God in the ordinary. And it's a reaction to those fears I have just described. This has been a helpful corrective to me!

One of them is called 'Liturgy of the Ordinary' by Tish Harrison Warren and she says: "A sign hangs on the wall in a New Monastic Christian community house: "Everyone wants a revolution. No one wants to do the dishes." I

was, and remain, a Christian who longs for revolution, for things to be made new and whole in beautiful and big ways. But what I am slowly seeing is that you can't get to the revolution without learning to do the dishes. The kind of spiritual life and disciplines needed to sustain the Christian life are quiet, repetitive, and ordinary. I often want to skip the boring, daily stuff to get to the thrill of an edgy faith. But it's in the dullness of the Christian faith—the making the bed, the doing the dishes, the praying for our enemies, the reading the Bible, the quiet, the small—that God's transformation takes root and grows."

What I found fascinating about these Christmas movies is that they are all about finding hope in the ordinary. While the protagonist thinks the answer lies in having a successful life, they have missed what makes life truly good. There is always this one scene – they are back home and either cooking or doing the dishes with their family and they have this look of realisation on their face... this is the stuff of life! Thus begins a yearning to return – to stay, something that James Rebanks the shepherd experienced also. He decided to continue on the very traditional shepherding career of his father and grandfather. He says: "To work there is a humbling thing, the opposite of conquering a mountain, if you like; it liberates you from any illusion of self-importance."

Whether it's power, fame, career fulfillment or money or doing BIG THINGS for God... we live in a culture where success stories are prominent. But the story of Jesus' humble birth and the announcement to the humble Shepherds teach us that God is in the ordinary.

I'll finish with a quotation from a sermon from Barbara Brown Taylor:

"Every ordinary, created thing has become transparent with his glory. There is gold in the straw and myrrh in the dung on the floor, the cows smell of frankincense, the dogs bark hosanna, and the star shows seekers from every corner of the earth where to look for God – not up in the heavens, but in the gorgeous hubbub of the world. For tonight, at least, let us revel in the light of that star beneath which the ordinary becomes holy and the holy ordinary, beneath which it becomes exceedingly clear that there is nothing more we must do or be to loved by God... For tonight, at least, let us believe that on the first day of Christmas – and on the second, and on every day of our lives – what our true love sends us is his holy self, decked out in flesh like ours, and if we have the wisdom to embrace the everyday stuff of our lives, then it is God himself who is born in our arms."



Parish Council Notes

Meeting of Monday 12th December

Watsonia car park sale

- Banyule Council, Diocese agreed on \$800,000. Archbishop-in-Council: proceeds split 60/40 between parish and Diocese. Not yet clear what restrictions on use of money.

Grants

- A grant application re Watsonia receiving favourable consideration? More info to come.

Budget

- APM: send revised budget document to all on the electoral roll for approval. Has been done: all responses received were favourable. This budget therefore approved by Parish Council.

Finance report

- Reports for November, and year to date (Oct–Nov). Nov deficit \$2,122. Year-to-date surplus \$75,767, but due to three one-offs: insurance payment \$39,234; Watsonia car park rent (\$15,829); contributions to Gift Day (\$32,310).
- Completed Diocesan Assessment form: shows 2023 assessment \$16053. Lower than 2022, largely because of high repair costs for Gloucester Drive. Covering letter drafted; documents will shortly be sent to Diocese.
- A further Rosanna hall damage insurance payout of around \$2000 still to be received.
- Footscape's use of Rosanna hall space can continue on a month-by-month basis.
- Discussions continuing with St Peter's re when and where they hold services when St Andrew's unavailable. At present they are paying comparatively little for St Andrew's church and hall: amount should be reviewed.
- Discussions with Dance Group about use of St John's halls: proposed a fixed annual rate, also other changes. Long discussion. Agreed in principle to fixed annual rate, but still many details to be resolved. Contact other churches whose facilities are used by dance groups.

St John's

- Solar panels: an appropriate system about \$20,000; with government subsidies, \$11,500–12,000. Follow up, investigate other possible sources of support.
- Discussions with Cathedral Dean about ways the space at St John's could be developed.
- Rev Glenn Loughrey put suggestions for an art installation at St John's symbolising the historic journeying of the Wurundjeri people to their meeting place at the confluence of Salt Creek with the Yarra. A grant will be applied for. Ask Glenn to prepare a scope of works: \$1500, to be paid when and if grants pay.

St Andrew's final service

- Denise felt the final service at St Andrew's had gone well; encouraged by the readiness of people to stand up and talk about what clergy, activities, and other parishioners at St Andrew's had meant to them.
- In January Denise finding suitable new homes for movable items at St Andrew's; would appreciate help.

New BCA Link Missionary

- Discussions with BCA re new Link Missionary: proposed Jude Benton in Mallacoota: approved. Parishioners to be encouraged to provide support to Jude through prayer and giving.

Student minister

- Resumé and covering letter from Sarah Coe. Happy to offer her student minister in 2023.

ADOM Compliance Calendar

- Circulated.

Lay assistants at Holy Communion

- As required, list of parishioners who might act as lay assistants at Holy Communion drawn up. After amendment, approved.

Vicar's report

- The way that God has blessed us in the last couple of months has been amazing!
- Gift day was tremendously successful, and support of parishioners has been wonderful.
- Welcome to 2022/3 Parish Council.
- APM went really well – thanks to all.
- Final Thursday Bible Study for 2023 will be this week – then on pause till Feb.
- Attended the annual Richard McKinney Lecture (Banyule Churches Together) re the National Voice to Parliament.
- Watsonia Christmas Festival – a GREAT first effort – well done to Jono for organisation.
- Continuing to monitor St John's restoration.
- Watsonia Town Square: amount agreed to by Banyule Council and the ADOM is [redacted]. Thankful that after letter to the Abp in Council agreed split of money is 60/40 in our favour.
- The final service at St Andrew's went really well – thanks to all those who contributed!
- Meeting re Rosanna site on Monday 12 Nov 2022 – wardens and ADOM.
- During January, Jonathan and I will take turns to take Sunday services, visit other churches.
- I completed my studies (Grad Cert of Professional Pastoral Supervision) at Ridley for this year 1 Dec with submission of essay, reflection piece, supervision sessions. Final subject will be completed at an intensive in Feb 2023.

Associate's report

- **Summary:**
 - Discussion with Denise to have Alpha Term 1 2023. Alpha not registered, a few enquires.
 - Two couples marriage prep (Jan, April 2023).
 - Design of church Christmas boards with Rachael. Printed post cards and letter box drops.
 - Working with Denise, St Andrew's closure FAQs.
 - Attending *mainly music* fortnightly to connect with local families, advertise Christmas stuff.
 - Completed last boxing session Simpson Barracks 08/12/22, will resume 02/02/23.
 - Catch up Peter Carolane 29/11 with Denise re church revitalisation: notes and learnings.
 - Orientated Elizabeth, Heather re live-streaming.
 - Design, distribution Mini-Christmas Carnival ads.
 - Mini-Christmas Carnival, Holy Spirit: complete.
 - People re launch of Watsonia revitalisation.
 - 2nd Focus Group meet 30/11 conducted.
 - Mulch delivery from St John's to Holy Spirit.

• Thanks:

- Mini-Christmas Carnival

• Prayers:

- Bible Study to meet 13/12 to pray for launch of new service.
- Christmas events / services.
- **Goals next month:**
 - Christmas events / services.
 - Prep for 2023.

• Goals next quarter (Jan–Mar):

- Working with Denise for 2023 plans.
- Holy Spirit Watsonia: meeting with Bible study to pray re launch date for morning service.
- Annual leave for a week 23–29/01/23.

Wardens' report

• Heidelberg

- \$790 quote for new guttering over the decking accepted.
- Beehive area landscaped to provide level ground for the hives, so moved away from the pedestrian path.
- Meeting with Leeson's re solar power at Heidelberg came up with some very positive results.
- Granted a \$10,000 Capital Works Grant from Banyule Council towards lining the sewerage pipe under the car park that has fine tree roots growing into it.

• Community Garden

- Banyule Arts & Culture Project Grant application successful: Time Tracks Stoneware Tiles/Manna Gum Leaf Bench project to receive \$2164.
- Meeting with Rev Glenn Loughrey re an art installation in the garden reflecting the previous journeying of the Wurundjeri to their nearby meeting place at the confluence of Salt Creek with the Yarra.

• Rosanna

- Permit from Banyule Council for the removal of the tree that is affecting 34 Grandview Grove's driveway. We will be required to plant a replacement tree. At a meeting with the diocese it was decided that the whole property should be divested.

• Watsonia

- Congregation reported difficulty clearing weeds in their garden. Few are able to work for long periods and the weeds are getting the better of them. A working bee was held after church on 20th November and enough progress made to encourage further work.
- Evaporative coolers serviced after excessive water escape. Replacement parts ordered for both units, to be installed 13th Dec.

General business

- Now no more services at St Andrew's, can Holy Spirit change back to Sunday morning? Denise and Jonathan will look at implications and discuss with affected people.
- Parishioners at Holy Spirit need help maintaining the gardens. Wardens to take such steps as needed for support.
- Denise to determine what steps needed to re-locate the St Andrew's memorial garden to St John's, and take appropriate action.
- Draft APM minutes circulated. Appreciation to Editor for comprehensiveness, entertainment.

Minutes by Mike Connor, précis by Editor

A man left Chicago for a vacation in Key West. His wife was on a business trip and planned to fly down to meet him the next day. When the man arrived in Florida, he e-mailed his wife to let her know he had arrived, but mistyped her address.

Instead, his message went to the inbox of a woman whose husband had just passed away. When the grieving widow opened her e-mail, she read the message, screamed, and passed out cold.

The woman's daughter rushed into the room and found this note on the

computer screen. "My darling wife: Just checked in. Everything is prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to being with you again. Your loving husband. P.S. Sure is hot down here!"

<http://www.rd.com/jokes/religion/>