

# BANYULE BABBLE

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

JANUARY  
2025

Office: 1 Burgundy Street Heidelberg 3084 ph. 9457 1144

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

Internet: [www.banyuleparish.org.au](http://www.banyuleparish.org.au) email [banyuleparish@gmail.com](mailto:banyuleparish@gmail.com)

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

## DENISE'S DATELINE

### Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!

THE carols have been playing on repeat in the shopping centres for weeks now; when I worked in retail as a student, we all grew heartily tired of the dozen or so carols that were piped into our workplaces each day: repetition can do that to a person. I also recall my brother badgering our Mum, who worked in a record shop, for a copy of ABBA's latest, 'Fernando'; when he received it, he played it about 27 times in a row – and then declared, 'I don't like that song anymore'!

Yet some things, like our annual celebration of Christmas, the Christmas Eve Carols in the Myer Music bowl, the gathering with loved ones, and the love expressed through the exchange of gifts do not seem to dull as the years advance. While we might bemoan the preparations and the traffic and the expense, the time to draw aside with our loved ones is always precious.

For Christians, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ as a human being, does not for us breed the contempt of familiarity, but reawakens in us each year the wonder and joy at God's wondrous gift to humanity. We love to gather to praise God in song, as we turn to our favourite hymn-carols, the ones that are not so familiar in the shops, or on TV. We sing our prayer in Advent, 'O come, O come Emmanuel', as we anticipate the Emmanuel moment – God with us. We praise God in carols written all over the world, such as 'The Virgin Mary had a baby boy' from the West Indies, 'Felice Navidad' from Puerto Rico, to 'The North wind is tossing the leaves' from Australia, proclaiming God's care for the whole world, not just our portion of it.

And on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, we shout out to all around us, God's great message of love: **Joy to the World, The Lord is come! Let earth receive her King!** This IS a joyous message of God's Love, that God's King, the Lord Jesus Christ is to be received, that is, welcomed and honoured, by all.

In an era when the greeting 'Merry Christmas' or 'Happy Christmas' is being lost to the generic greeting 'Happy Holidays' (in some attempt to avoid offending or alienating anyone, or to make Christmas celebrations less religious), it is wonderful that we can sing wholeheartedly the carols and hymns that proclaim God's love, mercy and invitation to all people.

It is a joyful message, that our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem all those years ago; God becoming a human being and living and dying as one of us, to redeem us for himself, and welcome us into his Kingdom, his family.

May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas.

Denise



### Christmas and beyond!

Tuesday December 24.....**5 pm** St John's: Children's carols  
**9 pm** St John's

Wednesday December 25.....**9.30 am** Holy Spirit  
**9.30 am** St John's

Sunday December 29 .....**9.30 am** Holy Spirit

Sunday January 5 .....**9.30 am** St John's

Sunday January 12 .....**9.30 am** Holy Spirit

Sunday January 19 .....**9.30 am** St John's

Sunday January 26 .....**9.30 am** Holy Spirit

Sunday February 2 .....**9.30 am** St John's: Commissioning

### Please welcome the Lous!

Our curate couple, the Rev'd Xiaoxi Lou\* (below, in yellow) and her husband Rev'd Weiyi Lou\* (below, right), with their children Charlie and Charlotte, will move to Rosanna in early January, and start work around mid-January. We shall have a third of their time, and Greensborough two-thirds. We'll mainly see Xiaoxi, who will be with us on Sundays, while Weiyi and the children will be at Greensborough.



\* The editor is using the Western tradition of given name followed by family name, as that is how the names have been presented to him. He will however check the Lous' preference when they come.

To pronounce the x, make a *sh* sound through your front teeth. The tip of your tongue is below your lower front teeth and the middle of your tongue should rise to the roof of your mouth.



## Last Month – December

**Tuesday 24th Christmas Eve:** 5 pm St John's Children's Carols; 9 pm St John's Christmas Eve  
*Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 2:1–20*

**Wednesday 25th: Christmas Day:** 9.30 am St John's; 9.30 am Holy Spirit  
*Isaiah 9:2–7; Luke 2:1–20*

**Sunday 29th Christmas 1:** 9.30 am Combined, Holy Spirit  
*Colossians 3:12–17; Luke 2:41–52*

## This Month – January

**Sunday 5th Christmas 2, Epiphany – 1:** 9.30 am St John's  
*Isaiah 60:1–6; Matthew 2:1–12*

**Sunday 12th Epiphany 1:** 9.30 am Holy Spirit  
*Isaiah 43:1–7; Luke 3:15–22*

**Sunday 19th Epiphany 2, Aboriginal Sunday:** 9.30 am St John's  
TBA

**Sunday 26th Epiphany 3, Aus Day:** 9.30 am Holy Spirit  
*Jeremiah 29:4–14; John 8:31–36*

## Wanted

- More mainly music volunteers

## Money: October–November

Income:	Giving:	\$17,447.29
	Other:	\$28,111.26
	Total:	\$45,558.55
Expenses:		\$38,692.85
Surplus:		\$6,865.70

## Holy Spirit Mothers' Union

Our first meeting for 2025 will be on January 22<sup>nd</sup> (the fourth Wednesday in the month). After our cuppa and service, the meeting will be a planning day, as our new Melbourne President is intending to visit us this year. We shall end with Midday Prayers.

I have received a letter from a seaman via the *Mission to Seafarers*:

### TO ALL OUR WONDERFUL KNITTERS

*Your Beanies Continue to be in Demand*

Even as we approach summer your beanies continue to be in demand by the seafarers visiting Melbourne. Over 1000 seafarers visit the Mission building in Docklands each month and so demand is always high as they search through the beanies for their favourite colours. The seafarers' appreciation for your efforts are summed up in the following note we received from a seafarer:

*Greetings.*

*Today I visited the Mission to Seafarers Victoria. Amidst a nicely decorated hall was this basket containing 'FREE BEANIES'. Many seafarers picked up one as if it was a just a small piece of garment. I could not help thinking about those two hands who knitted them and the thought behind it. Did anybody really know how harsh the winds can be at sea, I thought. The answer was written in every knot of the colourful caps. I too picked one and then thought how to thank those two hands..... to those hands and to that mission—on behalf of all the seafaring community I thank you from my heart for such commitment—that is what keeps the humanity alive.*

*Regards, Inderjeet, a Seafarer*

On behalf of the seafarers who give up so much to provide for their families and who keep our economy moving,

Neil James, Chief Executive Officer, The Mission to Seafarers Victoria

— Elsie Storr

## Christmas cheer at the vicarage!







Denise's 'at home' on the afternoon of 14th December was a great success. There were so many parishioners that they had to be divided between two rooms. Denise's father Wally (below) was the life of the party in suitably festive garb.

Robin Miller, whilom clothier and gentlemen's outfitter, fashion consultant, artist, and Mothers' Union Treasurer *manqué*, tried to explain to the Editor how Denise's taste in art was that of a true connoisseur, and her collection was superb. The Editor, on his part, utterly failed to appreciate it, having no sense of modern art whatever. He did however express appreciation of a small bronze nude (not shown), because he could work out what it was.





## Sunday's service, 24th November

To understand what happened on that mad morning, we must go even further back, to a week prior, on Sunday 17th November. All was in readiness for that service, the candles lit, parishioners in their pews, Denise greeting people, Elizabeth had the clicker, the Editor ready to work the livestream. We were about to start, and the computer in front of the Editor told him the camera had dropped out. Frenzied attempts to fix it failed, and the service had to continue without the livestream.

Now let us move forward to the 24th. Denise turned up early, and so did the Editor. The livestream camera was still not working, but there was more time. Lots of cable connections were tried, and eventually the Editor found a wonky one that worked if you wiggled it, and failed again if you wiggled it again. So it was again rewiggled, and we were ready to go.

Denise moved on to the laptop containing the hymns, which were separate from the Order of Service slides. She plugged in the audio, and there was terrific feedback, oh dear. So she unplugged it, and told Heather to plug it in when the hymns were on, and only then. 'Right, it's working', she said, and was recorded by the video saying these fateful words. 'Good-oh', said the Editor, also recorded, and similarly tempting Satan. 'All good', said Denise to Elizabeth.

The livestream was now on, rather earlier than expected; and those watching, wishing to hear Denise lead us in worship, instead heard the Editor rabbit on to Heather at tedious length about transcription difficulties, not realising the microphone was picking up everything he said *sotto voce*, while not picking up anything he deliberately spoke into it.

The Editor and Heather moved on to complaints about Microsoft's latest operating systems, then Elizabeth joined in with discussions of how to work the technology. Somehow from this, Heather described Anglican churches as either being 'high and hazy, low and lazy, or broad and crazy', which caused Denise to wonder which she was, for which of course there is no polite, or accurate, answer.

The Editor now realised that the camera was on an angle, giving a picture of St John's after a severe earthquake: the arm holding the camera had fallen a bit. So Denise tried to fix it while the Editor gave confusing directions, all followed with interest by the livestreamers. 'Every time I move it, it throws itself into a tizzy', said Denise, accurately describing the situation. 'That's worse', said the Editor, exasperatingly unhelpful. 'Just tell me what to do, Peter', said Denise with acerbity. Now it was better, but it had to be rotated. The elderly Editor didn't know which way was left and which right. 'I think that will do', said the Editor. 'Yes, that's fine'. Unnoticed by those present, the arm started slowly dropping again, giving the livestreamers the feeling we were at sea and had struck a small iceberg.

Denise now started the service. 'Good morning, everyone', she said. 'Sorry for the late start . . .' The livestreamers wondered why she didn't slide across the now alarmingly-tilted floor. It was also noticeable to all that Denise's voice was coming out of the computer a second after she said it, creating a disconcerting echo effect. 'It's really irritating', said Denise when she first heard it, and after the Grace the irritation rose to exasperation. The Editor suggested turning the computer sound off, which appeared to fix the problem. 'Good on you', said Denise. 'Great!'

But it was not so great, as the sinking continued. The livestreamers wondered when there would be a rush for the life-boats, and whether there would be enough, or whether the third-class congregants would miss out and go down with the ship. We got through the Collect and it was time for the first hymn (*Make Way for the King of Kings*). 'Let's stand and

sing!' said Denise. There followed a huge cacophony of feedback. According to the transcript, Denise then said, 'Okay!' indicating that it was very much not okay; but to the Editor it sounds very much like she is saying 'McKay!' in stern tones. 'What is happening here?' she continued. 'This has never happened before!' The Editor feared very much that he was responsible.

Denise reassured a new member of the congregation that she was not responsible (but did not so reassure the Editor). At first she blamed a far-too-high volume setting (person responsible unnamed), but then said, 'Oh, I know! I plugged it into the wrong thing. What a dope!' 'It's one of those ID 10T problems, isn't it?', she said, using a computer tech term that the Editor was not aware of. Apparently if a tech person calls base and says it's an ID 10T problem, it means that it's because the user has been an idiot and done something stupid.

(Indeed it seems there are a very large number of similar code expressions, designed to save incompetent but possibly important paying customers from the knowledge that their stupidity is to blame. Among many others, there is for example PEBKAC ('problem exists between keyboard and chair') or PICNIC ('problem in chair, not in computer'), IBM error ('idiot behind machine error'), and so on. In Denmark they have *Fejl 40*, 'error 40', indicating that the error was 40 centimetres from the device. In Brazil they may call it a BIOS problem (*bicho\* ignorante operando o sistema*). More academic computer scientists refer to 'wetware bugs', while in the car repair industry they may use the term 'faulty steering actuator'.)

So Denise plugged the whatchamacallit into a different thingamabob, and now the audio was quite adequate. Unfortunately, the video, which had previously worked, was now absent—and it contained all the words to a hymn with which we were not very familiar. 'It's not working, is it?' said Denise. This comment did not add any information to the congregation about the technology that they did not already know; but it did inform them of Denise's remarkable fortitude, in avoiding expressing those sentiments in much stronger language.

This was particularly so, as Denise tried more variations, without success. 'What is happening?' she asked the Lord, as another bout of feedback assailed the ears. 'We cannot deal with that, can we?' The echo effect returned, which with the music and the feedback and cries of concern caused a rising tide of musical cacophony. The whole church was now tilting at a dangerous angle before the eyes of the livestreamers. 'Make way, make way!' sang the video in stridently dissonant rising tones, presumably demanding the congregation allow entry to people in white coats bearing straitjackets. 'What could I possibly do?' asked Denise, her voice echoing back to her with a one-second delay. It was scary!

But she didn't have to do anything. A member of the congregation found the words were in the *Mission Praise* hymnbook, so we could sing to the audio only. Denise turned off the echo, and the dragon was slain!

Well, it struggled a bit in its death throes. 'Now why isn't this whole thing working now . . . Now we're not on at all in the thingo, Peter', said Denise to the Editor, but she dealt with it. The Editor noticed that the camera arm had fallen down again, and pointed it out. 'Oh strike!' said Denise. She asked Heather to lead the congregation in singing a *cappella*, which they did admirably, while she fixed the camera—which stayed where it was, at merely a rakish angle, for the rest of the service.

It seemed that everything had settled down, and we got through Confession and Absolution, Readings, Denise's sermon

\* Masculine gender, but not necessarily specific to males. A difficult word to translate: animal, beast; insect, bug, grub; when used for a person, normally more or less pejorative; but in Brazilian slang in the vocative, an equivalent of bro/buddy/dude/mate.

(see page 9) and the Creed without a hitch. There was some tension at the second hymn. 'Let's see if it works this time', said Denise. 'This comes out, and goes in there, maybe', said Heather under her breath, easily picked up by the microphone, 'see if that works.' 'I think I might have to put it in there again—see if it works', said Denise, similarly under her breath, and as easily picked up by the microphone. But this time the video came up, and the audio likewise, with no feedback or echo. Hooray! Except . . . the video didn't have the words that it was supposed to have. 'Boy, we're not having a good time today, are we?' Denise said. So she told us just to sit back and enjoy it.

At this point the Editor, who had the livestream in front of him, noticed that the slides of the words had disappeared from the screen. 'No problem, I'll just turn them back on', he thought to himself; but then discovered that the slides had inexplicably been replaced by the previous week's slides. The dragon was not quite dead.

Denise was most amused, and repeated to the congregation some words the Editor had said earlier to the detriment of William of Ockham (1287–1347),\* who famously promulgated 'Occam's Razor'. Occam's Razor stipulates that the simplest explanation, that is, the one that makes the fewest assumptions or has the fewest elements, is the most likely. It seems very reasonable, and yet the Editor has continually run up against situations where it seems to be violated. Thus if a computer fails, it seems far more likely to be due to one fault (with any faults that follow as a consequence), than that two independent faults would happen

to occur at the identical time. Yet the Editor has observed exactly this, too many times.

By the Communion, the Editor realised that last week's words would suffice, so he put them up for the livestreamers. They weren't *exactly* the same—the post-communion prayer was different—but he did his best.

Then there was a third hymn.

'Dear God, is this going to work today? Let's see', prayed Denise. Most clergy at this stage would have decided to drop the hymn, but Denise was made of sterner stuff. Indeed, some sound was produced, and some video. 'I think it's working', said Denise; but she was to be disappointed. 'I don't know, I don't know', she said, giving up. 'Who'd like to choose a song from *Mission Praise*?' she asked. 'A short one.'

But then Denise suggested we sing the Benediction, an excellent suggestion, and she got ready to start us off. 'How does it go again?' she asked, realising she had forgotten. 'Gee, we're having a bad day, aren't we?' But some members of the congregation helped, and we got it done. Denise blessed us, and we went in peace.

At morning tea Neville Collins, who we know has personal experience of vicaring, told the Editor that if it had been he to whom it had happened, he would have required the services of a competent psychiatrist. Indeed, it seems that we can conclude that Denise can handle just about anything.

\* Ockham is a village in Surrey. Readers of Umberto Eco's book *The Name of the Rose* will recognise that the major character 'William of Baskerville' is a fictionalised version of William of Ockham.

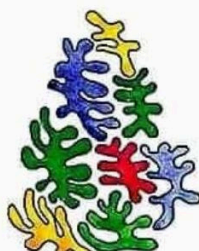
## ARTIST'S CHRISTMAS TREES



Botticelli



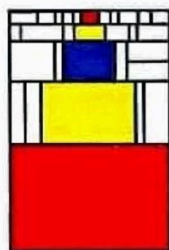
Dalí



Matisse



Michelangelo



Mondrian



Monet



O'Keeffe



Picasso



Seurat



Van Gogh



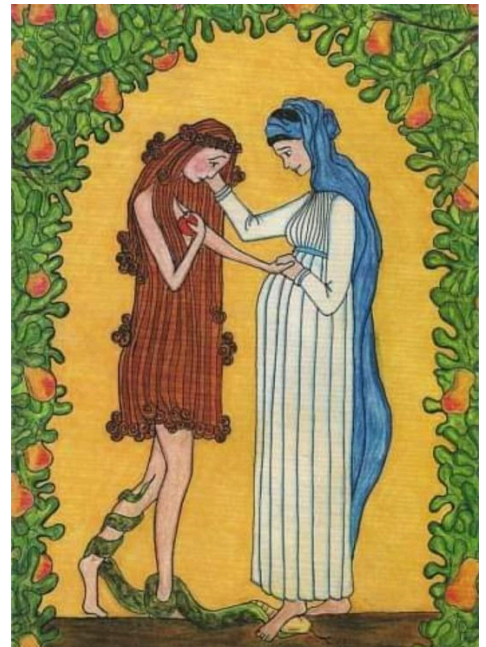
Vermeer



Warhol



All these cartoons submitted by Denise Nicholls





## Mission News

### Rowan in Indonesia:

In Matthew 1:23, the Gospel writer quotes from the prophet Isaiah:

*'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall name him Emmanuel',  
which means, 'God is with us.'*

Emmanuel is a statement. The good news of Christmas is that Emmanuel, the promised child of the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14, has come down to earth to be with us and for us, for the specific purpose of rescuing us from the power and penalty of sin.

Thank you for your ongoing and continual prayers and encouragement and support over the past year. Your partnership with me . . . enables me to serve here in Indonesia, building up the saints in the international church where I serve as vicar and mentoring and supporting Indonesian clergy and pastors as they serve their congregations.

A prayer for you this Christmas:

*May God, who knows your path  
and the places where you rest,  
be with you in your waiting  
be your good news for sharing,  
and lead you in the way that is everlasting. Amen*

### Ibadah Pembaptisan dan Pernikahan dan Adven dan Natal (= Baptism and Wedding and Advent and Christmas Services)

This time of the year is always busy at church with extra services (think Sunday School Nativity plays, Carol Services); this year it was even busier as I was the celebrant at an adult baptism as well as two weddings in early December: one wedding was in Indonesian and the other in English.

Please do pray for Ridoi and Novia, and also for Fredy and Angela, as they begin married life together.

*The Word became flesh and blood,  
and moved into the neighbourhood.  
We saw the glory with our own eyes,  
the one-of-a-kind glory,  
like Father, like Son,  
Generous inside and out,  
true from start to finish.*

(John 1:14 – The Message Translation)

Our focus at church during Advent as we prepare to celebrate Christmas has been on John 1:14 as our key bible verse, and thinking about what it means for God to come down to earth (Immanuel, God with us) and for God's people to be down-to-earth as we live in our own particular neighbourhoods, and inviting our families, neighbours, and friends to come and worship Christ, the new-born King.

Please do pray for times of great joy and celebration at All Saints and for other churches across the country this Christmas as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, and also for safety and protection.

### Conversations with university students

Last weekend four students from Universitas Negeri Jakarta visited the church so they could undertake research for a presentation about significant cultural and historical buildings and institutions in Jakarta. Not all of the students were Christians, but they were all interested in what I shared with them about the history of the church and its ministry and mission.

All of the students also had questions about the Christian faith (for example, what is the meaning of Holy Communion), the furnishings in the church (for example, why does the baptismal font have eight sides), as well questions about evil

spirits and witchcraft (for example, does the Anglican church conduct exorcisms).



F, who is one of the students, later contacted me to ask if he could join one of the carol services.

Please do pray for the Holy Spirit to be at work in the life of F and the other students, drawing them into a relationship with God and His people, and that F will have the courage to join one of the carol services.

### An intern update

Last month I asked for your prayers as I shared that the Wardens and I had held a second interview with a candidate and that we were making a recommendation to the Church Council.

I am excited to let you know that J will commence as an intern on 2 January next year. J will be helping us in a number of areas, including the children's, youth and young adult ministries, as well as our Sunday services.

Please do pray for J as he starts here at All Saints, that he will settle in quickly, will grow in his faith and skills, and be open to where God is leading him.

### Supporting the work

If you are a person who prays, I would appreciate your prayers thanking God for:

- His work in the lives of F and the other university students;
- Calling J to serve as an intern here at All Saints.

I would also appreciate your prayers for:

- Safety and protection for Christians across the country over the Christmas and New Year;
- God to bring some more families to join us.

Rowan

### Jude and Andy Benton in East Gippsland:

The Bentons ask us to pray for Christmas celebrations in the community and in the church, and for the Beach Missions that come to Mallacoota for the summer—Scripture Union Beach Mission and THEOS—as they prepare, travel to Mallacoota and present summer programs. They and we pray that seeds be planted in those present.

## Blokes Helping Blokes

December's meeting, though quite early in December (the 7th), had a Christmassy feel. David Fitzgerald, for example, had invented a Christmas game for *Kids' Hope*, which involved large wooden dice with letters from 'CHRISTMAS' glued on, which he had made, and also a set of rules, which he had invented.

Our convenor Glen Farrington spoke to the Blokes at length about the importance of getting their prostates checked. He urged that it should not just be by blood test, but by digital examination, which he said may make your eyes water but gave information complementary to the blood test.

Glen then went on to say how appreciative he was of the Editor's publishing of the Blokes' proceedings in the *Banyule Babble*. He said the rest of that rag was nothing much, but people got hold of it just for those reports. It was helpful for Blokes who could not make the meeting. (He did not mention that a number of wives read it to see what their men are up to.)

Glen also mentioned that once when he was little and his mother took him shopping, he saw a toy with a little monkey on a string between two sticks, that could be made to swing up and around. (The Editor has seen the terms 'acrobat animals squeeze toy', 'tumbling toy', 'flip jack', 'acrobat string toy' and 'trapeze monkey' used.) He wanted one, but his mother refused: he thinks they were much poorer then than he had believed. It might have taken many Christmas lumps of coal to make the value of the toy.

Glen then wove these two disparate threads together, by presenting the Editor with an award for his editing, in the form of a 'monkey swing' of very similar design, which even the Editor could make to work when he was shown how to do it. It also contained 13 grams of hard lollies designed to break the Editor's fragile teeth. The Editor was deeply touched.

The theme for the meeting was 'Mr Christmas'. Rob said there was something seriously wrong with Mr Christmas, because in this season of good will and jollity an amount of approximately a thousand dollars had been extorted from his bank account for two children's bicycles that he was required to purchase but not ride.

Allan said he had avoided a similar fate when he asked a perfume counter to replicate a bottle of perfume that he had photographed in his daughter's Manhattan apartment. After getting the keys they had unlocked a safe and extracted a very small bottle with a huge price tag. But Allan is made of sterner stuff and said there was no way he was going to spend that many hundreds on such a tiny bottle of fluid, when he could get a slab of beer at Liquorland for \$50.

Glen said it was terrible what Father Christmas could do, and he had heard that gentleman was a fraud. He had been told so by the Easter Bunny.

The Editor said that a small boy had asked another if Satan was real, and the other had said, 'Nah, it's like Father Christmas—it's just your Dad.'

There were several comments about how the message of Christmas was buried under commercialism, and now had little reference to the Incarnation of Jesus. One Bloke said he had found it very difficult to get Christmas cards with a true Christmas message. They mostly just had winter scenes. Even some 'religious' cards did not have much of a message.

There was also much dislike of the 'Xmas' spelling.\*

\* In fact the use of 'X' or 'Xi' as an abbreviation for 'Christ' is very old. Originally Xp was used, an abbreviation of the Greek Χριστός, Christ—often capitalised as XP, from ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, and made into a monogram, the Chi Rho ☩. The Chi Rho is believed to have been first used in the Christian sense by Emperor Constantine the Great, the first Christian Roman emperor, at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge in 312; but it had been used long before as an abbreviation of words like χρηστός, good, useful.

Blokes commented that they wondered how children now could learn the true Christmas story. Some Christmas shows were recommended, in particular 'Road to Bethlehem', put on by the Seventh Day Adventists.

Keith also put in an appeal for people to go to the Christmas Carols at Rosanna Uniting, 21 Arden Crescent, at 8 pm on Christmas Eve. They would be in the lower hall because the church is closed because of asbestos, but it will be the 50th year of carols at Rosanna Uniting on Christmas Eve; but Keith thinks it is likely to be the last. The carols are followed by a service, famous for being filled with candles: in the past up to 320, burning on window ledges and on temporary supports all though the church, though this year most of the candles will be electrical. The service will be followed by a supper.

Glen gave an anecdote of a Christmas experience, but, in spite of his earlier comments of how appreciative he was of the Editor's publishing of the Blokes' proceedings in the *Banyule Babble*, he sternly forbade it to be published, so it won't be, despite the very interesting insight it gave into certain aspects of an activity by Glen that the Editor is not allowed to talk about.

The Editor told the story about the small boy in England who wrote a letter to Santa asking for £100. The Post Office, not sure whom to send it to, sent it to 10 Downing St. The Prime Minister was touched, and directed that a £5 note be sent in return. He thought £5 would be a lot of money for a small boy.

Eventually a thank-you note was received:

*Dear Santa, thank you for the money. Unfortunately it came via the Government, and the bastards took 95% tax.*

We finished by expressing thanks to Glen for doing all the organising. There were also thanks to Allan, who had found the venue. Indeed, Allan is so much appreciated by the people at Viewbank Gardens (possibly for inviting *Blokes Helping Blokes* to grace the place with its presence; or possibly for telling people that the ABC report on financial misdoings by retirement villages was all wrong), that they have put his highly enlarged face (including nose) on a very large advertising board facing Rutherford Rd, inviting passers-by to come in and purchase a house and have Allan as a neighbour. When the Editor suggested the board might be more effective if they had used a more attractive-looking resident, Allan said there was no better-looking resident—something that the board does not mention. So buyer beware!

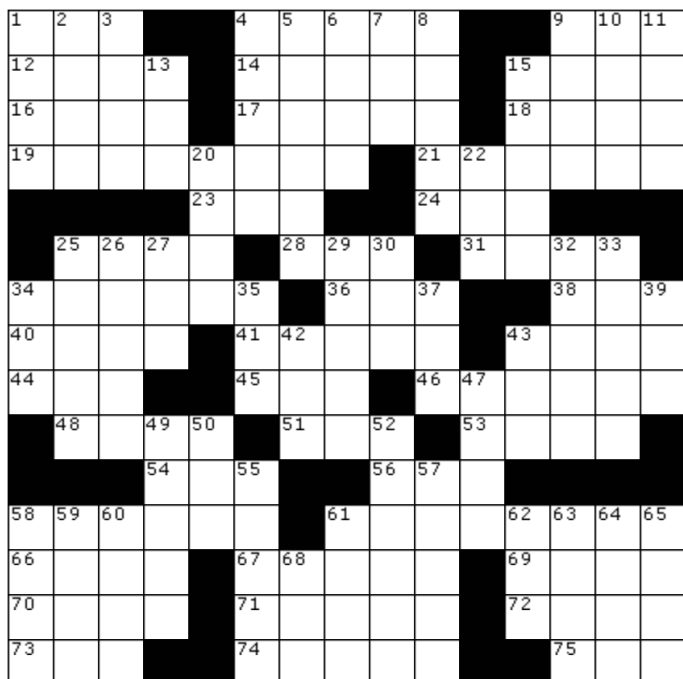
January's meeting will be later in the month than usual (the 18th?), because of holiday activities. As usual now, it is by invitation. If you would like an invitation, try calling Glen on 0487 852 808.



Greek X (chi) looks very like Roman X (Twitter), hence the latter's use for the former. In English its use for Christ goes back at least as far as the 11th century in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which indeed refers specifically to *Xþes mæsse* in about 1100. *X'temmas* is found in 1551, and *Xmas* in 1721.

Despite the quite long use of *Xmas*, including by writers such as Byron, Coleridge and Lewis Carroll, a number of people have deprecated it since the mid-20th century, probably from seeing it mostly used in commercial contexts (where its brevity was appreciated).





<https://www.christianbiblereference.org/crossword.htm>

**ACROSS**

- 1 Bow  
4 Grown-up  
9 Cash with order (abbr.)  
12 Island  
14 Popular game  
15 Fog  
16 Gas burner  
17 Hike  
18 Continent  
19 Survivor of fiery furnace  
21 An old age  
23 Epoch  
24 Dashed  
25 Told an untruth  
28 Total  
31 Artist Chagall  
34 Church official  
36 Cain fled to this land  
38 Old woman  
40 U.S. Air Force  
41 Jewish teacher  
43 Fancy car  
44 Resort hotel  
45 Samuel's mentor

- 46 Levelled off  
48 Wound covering  
51 Spots  
53 Object of false worship  
54 Married woman  
56 Youngest son of Noah  
58 Cheerful  
61 Robber pardoned by Pilate  
66 Coloured horse  
67 Dwelling  
69 Plague of Egypt  
70 Baths  
71 Italian city  
72 Grave  
73 American sign language  
74 Chew like a rodent  
75 Behold  
**DOWN**  
1 Gets older  
2 Greatgrand-mother of David  
3 Jesus turned water into wine here  
4 Communion table  
5 A Christian woman from Joppa  
6 Western state  
7 Long-term memory  
8 What a dot is to an 'i'  
9 Biblical Ethiopia  
10 Judicial  
11 Yes  
13 Fuming  
15 \_\_\_ Carta  
20 Do it again  
22 A name of God  
25 What a small child does  
26 Son of Abraham  
27 Extremely high frequency (abbr.)  
29 Unasked  
30 Throng  
32 Large African animal, for short  
33 Hard to pass through a needle?
- 34 Large vehicle  
35 Before (prefix)  
37 Vegetable dunk  
39 The Creator  
42 Wing  
43 Child  
47 South American capital  
49 Last words of prayers  
50 Undergarment  
52 Valley of the \_\_\_ of death  
55 Canned chili brand  
57 Regions  
58 \_\_\_ Minor (Little Dipper)  
59 What toast does, with "up"  
60 Phoenician god  
61 \_\_\_ fide  
62 Sandwich  
63 Life histories  
64 Peak  
65 Compass point  
68 TV lawyer  
Matlock

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

**Cryptogram** (<https://www.dltk-bible.com/cryptograms/cryptogram-index.htm>)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
24				17				1						11						16					

\_\_\_ I \_\_\_ A \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ I \_\_\_ O \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ E  
13 21 1 19 12 15 24 3 12 8 17 10 10 1 10 11 4 17 3 13 21 17

\_\_\_ E O \_\_\_ E , \_\_\_ U \_\_\_ E \_\_\_ O \_\_\_  
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3 1 10 17 10 16 23 11 8 7 11 16  
2 3 13 10 3 11 1 11 1 19 26 19 25

**Bible Word Search – Baby Jesus**

[https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws\\_BabeJesus\\_0.htm](https://www.christianbiblereference.org/ws_BabeJesus_0.htm)

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**.

Augustus, Bethlehem, Blessed, Caesar, Christ, Consecrated, Cyrenius, Decree, Dream, Emmanuel, Espoused, Gabriel, Galilee, Grace, Humble, Inn, Jerusalem, Joseph, Joy, Judea, Kingdom, Magi, Mary, Miracle, Nazarene, Nazareth, Peace, Pondered, Presentation, Prophetess, Revelation, Sacrifice, Salvation, Shepherds, Sign, Spirit, Star, Swaddling

**Answers to last month's puzzles**

Bible Word Search mystery answer: **THRONE OF GOD**

Last month's cryptogram:

DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, BUT IN EVERY SITUATION, BY PRAYER AND PETITION, WITH THANKSGIVING, PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD.



# Christ the King

24th November 2024

Revelation 1:4b–8; John 18:33–37

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

## Revelation 1:4b–8

*Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne,<sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.*

*To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,<sup>6</sup> and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.*

<sup>7</sup> *'Look, he is coming with the clouds,' and 'every eye will see him, even those who pierced him';*

*and all peoples on earth 'will mourn because of him.'*  
*So shall it be! Amen.*

<sup>8</sup> *'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'*

## John 18:33–37

<sup>33</sup> *Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?'*

<sup>34</sup> *'Is that your own idea,' Jesus asked, 'or did others talk to you about me?'*

<sup>35</sup> *'Am I a Jew?' Pilate replied. 'Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?'*

<sup>36</sup> *Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.'*

<sup>37</sup> *'You are a king, then!' said Pilate.*

*Jesus answered, 'You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.'*

I wonder if you saw Senator Lidia Thorpe when King Charles was here visiting a little while ago. She was shouting out, very loudly and proudly as an indigenous woman, 'Not my king!' She's even had a piece of jewellery made, that she way all the time now, that says 'Not my king'. However, since the invasion of Australia and subsequent settlement by British colonists, the land of Australia was claimed in the name of the Crown, so now we live under a constitutional monarchy.

There's rarely any intervention these days by the monarch in the affairs of Commonwealth nations. The monarch usually takes the advice of the Prime Minister of the nations. But when there is interference by the monarch, as we remember back in 1975, it is explosive. And whether or not our sympathies lie with the republican movement or a constitutional monarchy being maintained as we are now, we indeed have a monarch: King Charles III. Even though Senator Lidia Thorpe wears her necklace and declares very proudly and solemnly 'Not my king', she, like all Australian citizens, is still under the authority of the king. No matter how far distant that is, whether it's more ceremonial these days—which it is—but we still live in a constitutional monarchy.

Today's the celebration of Christ the King: a recent celebration, established by the church only about four or five hundred years ago. And we're going to look at two points today: *Christ's authority vindicated at his*

*second coming but first Christ's authority as king established.*

Well, monarchs have had many names over the years—Caesar, Pharaoh, King or Queen, Tsar, Sovereign, Ruler—but each of these people—and it's usually one person—is the established authority of the land, or the peoples whom they are ruling. How are monarchs made? Well in ancient times it was with might and power. There was blood and bloodshed. We don't need to go past Shakespeare's great play *The Tragedy of Macbeth*, where we see the bloodshed reflected. And most of the monarchs that we see in power today, even though most of them have very light power exercised upon the people—though not all—we don't need to go back too many hundred years where we see bloodshed or corruption or intrigue to have people established.

When I was visiting Istanbul many years ago on my way to Kyrgyzstan to visit my friend Lyn (whom you all know) when she first lived there, it was really interesting to take some of the tours around Istanbul, and to hear the stories of the Ottoman Empire—that when one person came to the throne, they would slaughter every single one of their relatives to ensure that only their bloodline could remain; and that included nephews and nieces and brothers—and so it was quite a yucky thing to have a change of monarch.

Sometimes people are just born with the correct bloodline from that family. Or there can be the excitement of someone entering into a royal family. Australians went a bit mad, didn't we, when a young woman from Tasmania named Mary married the Crown Prince of Denmark—and now she is Queen Mary of Denmark. We think, oh, isn't that fun and exciting! And I don't know whether it's more about the jewels or the dresses or whatever it is. [A voice: Everything!] Everything, that's right! Or whether a monarchy is established by a pact with the people, such as in the Restoration in the UK. But a monarch or a king has power and authority to rule.

God's Old Testament people lived at a time when kings would simply declare themselves to be king of a certain area. But God's Old Testament people were never to have a king originally, for God was their King. But they wanted to be like the other nations, and God said, 'Okay, I will give you a king, even though it will be hard for you.' God giving them a king was a concession.

When we come to Jesus' ministry on earth, we see that Jesus came to great conflict with religious and political leaders. And as we heard in the reading from John, at his trial before Pilate the big question was Jesus' authority. Was he a king? 'Are you a king?' questions Pilate. And yet Jesus, when he speaks of his kingdom and his rule, when he spoke of what it looked like, it was a challenge to both the religious and the political leaders of the time.

This conversation—Pilate asks Jesus, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' And in response, did you hear that Jesus spoke five times about 'my kingdom': 'my kingdom' is like this. His language is conveying that the kingdom that Jesus was speaking of, was a kingdom not of this world. Not established by bloodshed—well, it sort of was, but his own bloodshed; and not by power, but by sacrifice. It was not political, it was not about the exercise of forced power, it was entirely different.

The one whom we praise as our King, Jesus—he reigned from the cross. The bloodshed of Jesus established his kingdom. And he could have been seen as a vanquished one, but he accomplished his kingdom as the victor when he died for his people, his sheep.

And so King Jesus' reign was established on that Good Friday cross.

But as Christians, secondly, we look forward to Christ's vindication as King in his coming again. The vision given to St John of the Revelation has Jesus proclaimed as the faithful servant, the firstborn from the dead, the ruler of the kings of the earth, and the one who freed us from our sins through his blood. Jesus is the liberator, cleansing people by his blood shed on the cross; but now he is the King of kings and he will return.

When he comes on the clouds again a second time, it will not be as the babe of Bethlehem, it will be as ruler and King of all the world; and the Scriptures tell us that every eye will see and acknowledge that he is Lord of all—even those who pierced him. John tells us we'll see that Jesus truly is King. And I take it that when the Scriptures tell us that, it means not just the ones who pierced him being the Roman soldiers on that first Good Friday, but all people for whom Christ died, and all people who have rebelled against his rightful rule. Even those who have said, in word and deed, 'Jesus is not my king'. All people, the Scriptures tell us, will acknowledge, yes, Jesus is Lord of all. He is King.

Well, Christ's rule was established on the Good Friday cross. It will be vindicated at his second coming, and no one knows when that will be. But you know what's great? The loving, gracious offer of the King of kings, is that he opens wide his arms, not just on the cross, but to all people to come and live with him, and be with him. And he calls us his brothers and sisters. He calls us a kingdom of priests.

And that is why each week when we meet together, we bring our sacrifice and praise of worship to Christ the King. It is a loving and gracious offer by Jesus to fling open his heart and his hands to all people to come into his kingdom of grace, his kingdom of love, his kingdom established on the cross. His kingship will be vindicated by his return, and so we praise our Lord Jesus King of kings, and we say yes, Jesus, you are my King. Amen.

## Advent 1

1st December 2024

### 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

<sup>9</sup> *How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy we have in the presence of our God because of you?* <sup>10</sup> *Night and day we pray most earnestly that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.*

<sup>11</sup> *Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you.* <sup>12</sup> *May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you.* <sup>13</sup> *May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*

### Luke 21:25–38

<sup>25</sup> *There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea.* <sup>26</sup> *People will faint from terror, apprehensive of*

what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.<sup>27</sup> At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.<sup>28</sup> When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.'

<sup>29</sup> He told them this parable: 'Look at the fig-tree and all the trees.<sup>30</sup> When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near.<sup>31</sup> Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.'

<sup>32</sup> 'Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened.<sup>33</sup> Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.'

<sup>34</sup> 'Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you suddenly like a trap.<sup>35</sup> For it will come on all those who live on the face of the whole earth.'

<sup>36</sup> 'Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.'

<sup>37</sup> Each day Jesus was teaching at the temple, and each evening he went out to spend the night on the hill called the Mount of Olives,<sup>38</sup> and all the people came early in the morning to hear him at the temple.

### Sermon by Denise Nicholls

You know when you think you've done something, and you haven't? I forgot to print off my sermon, so I'll read it from here [sc. Denise's laptop]. I was thinking, can I remember it? And I thought, mmm, I won't trust my memory. Here we go. Come on, laptop, work. Yay, it's working! Fantastic!

As a child, the longest nights of the year for me were the night before my birthday, and the night before Christmas. I remember as a little girl standing out in Western Sydney, and it was a stinking hot day. There was a sou'-westerly blowing and it was hot and windy, and mum was taking the sheets off the line, and they were being whipped about. I said, 'Mum, when is Santa coming?' and she said, 'Tonight'. And I thought, that can't be right, this is such a terrible day. It must be a beautiful day when Santa is arriving.

I still look forward to things. I don't really stay awake anymore—I'm very good at sleeping—but I do look forward to holidays. And I know that all of us look forward to the end of the week, when we're still working; or school holidays for those [at school], especially the teachers; and for people who've been on night shift, like Emmi, I'm sure they look forward to when their days of night shift end, and they can have a big long sleep, and get back to a normal time.

Advent is the season of waiting and watching—these four weeks before Christmas, when we look forward to the coming of Jesus as the ruler of all, and the judge of the earth. Advent is a time about us looking into the darkness, and looking to the future of the light of Christ who is our hope; but Advent always begins in the dark.

There is darkness in our world. When we look at our world today, much is as the world has always been, since the time when Cain slew Abel. We see chaos, war climate change, people acting in fear of each other. We see it beyond our shores, and we give thanks to God for the safety that we enjoy here in Australia; but there is darkness here too. The death of young people on holiday, having a few drinks—an incredibly dark Christmas

for that family. Women and children traumatised by the ones that they love—and so the Anglican Church of Melbourne is participating with many others in these 16 days of activism, when we urge each other to pray against violence against women and children. And we have all experienced dark times in our lives, whether it's violence that we see on our screens, crimes against property and person—these are dark times.

We long for the coming of the light, and we try to achieve this light politically, and through legal means. So in Queensland there's been an attempt by the Queensland government—their cry is 'adult crimes deserves adult times'; and so their plan is to jail even children as young as 10 for committing crimes against property. And our federal government has passed new laws on social media: a ban for those who are under 16. I really would like to hear what Will and Josh and Cam have to say about that—our young men here in our church who are under that age, and might be 16 when the law comes into effect. And why has this been done by our federal polities? Because of the toll, the dark toll, that social media can have. And has had, on some young people. We live in dark times.

We can feel overwhelmed by these things, and wonder, is God really with us in all this darkness? Well, that's what the first century Christians that we read about in the first Thessalonians reading, and in the Gospel reading, were concerned about. How do they navigate their world, and the hope of Christ's return, are both there, in the letter and the gospel that we have read today.

Jesus points his friends to signs of the times, and uses language where image is poured upon image, to think about the disaster of people coping with the reality of darkness in their world. It's a language of upset and everything being turned upside down. Jesus says on the earth nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will shake. Poetic language, speaking about the upheaval that people experience, and will continue to experience. For it's a common experience of humanity at different times.

The early Christians to whom Paul wrote in Thessalonica were living in Northern Greece in the first century. There was civil war in Rome, and that meant great upheaval for the whole of the Roman Empire. We know about upheaval, don't we? We look around our own church and we see one of the key things is the Honour Roll—the Roll of Honour for those involved in the 'European War' as it was called. Not the 'First World War' because it was the first, and we didn't know there would be a second. And like me you've probably read the names of those who died—those with a star—and some families who lost two or three or four members of their family. Dark times indeed.

Or our own period of time in the last year—we can think of Ukraine, or Palestine. We can think of that poor country of Sudan: since 2023—only last year—there are now 8 million people who have been pushed out of the safety of their towns and who've sought refuge, still within their own nation but in other places. And over half of the population—that's 25 million people—face food insecurity,

and women and children, the possibility of gendered violence. Dark times.

And yet—and yet as John's gospel tells us, at the very beginning of the Gospel, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness will not overcome it. So the second point: even though there is darkness, light will conquer the darkness.

This morning as I was trying to print out my sermon (and then I left it on the printer) I had what many people experience when they're dealing with computers: a moment of absolute terror when the Black Screen of Death appeared on my computer. [Intake of breath] What will I do? How can I retrieve it? Is it out of power? Why has it suddenly gone black? People speak about the Blue Screen of Doom, I think, but the Black Screen of Death when the computer is dead and gone. Well, I plugged it back into its power source, and up came the light on my computer! (Although it still had a full battery, so I don't know why it did that; but you know these things, they have a mind of their own.)

The message of Advent is that when the earth is in upheaval, and every fixed star on our compass seems to be wavering, when it seems that all hell is breaking loose around the world and in our own lives, Jesus says to his friends in Luke's gospel: 'When all this occurs, lift up your heads: your redemption is drawing near'. For the Light of Christ gives hope, and it's a hope that shines in the darkness. For only light can dispel darkness. We can't fight darkness with more darkness: there has to be light.

And that is our hope. But it's not the easy shallow hope of 'Hmm, I hope it doesn't rain on my washing that I hung up the other day when I was thinking that' but it's that *deep down* hope, that inextinguishable hope that shines through the darkness of this present age, to the glory that awaits us. And it's that hope that we know that God is with us in the midst of the darkness.

This is the reality in which we live: there is a lot of darkness, and we've all experienced periods of darkness in our lives. Remember as kids playing hide and seek, and you'd think, 'Oh I'll go and hide in the cupboard', and it's dark. And that's fine for when the person comes and surprises you: the light streams in, and there's lots of laughter. But if you're someone who has claustrophobia, the darkness seems to envelop you. Or, heaven forbid, your brother or sister is naughty and locks you in the cupboard—and then the darkness seems terrifying. (Not that that happened: my brother didn't do that to me, and I didn't do it to him.) But we've all experienced a dark time: the loss of a loved one; fear of being hurt at work; a time of thinking, 'When is our suffering going to end?'

Yes, we all experience darkness. But Jesus has come. Jesus has entered into the darkness, and has promised to be with us in the midst of our darkness, and to guide us through it to the light. So our deep and abiding hope is in Christ, whose light will drive away all darkness.

In Advent, these four weeks leading up to Christmas, we look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus again, when God's love will reign, and God's peace will be the light that drives away all darkness. And until that day, we wait, we hope, we pray, we persevere; because we know that our hope is in Christ, who is our light.



## THE RETURN OF JESUS

*Sermon by Helen McAlley*

## JESUS SPEAKS OF HIS SECOND COMING

It was towards the end of Jesus' life on earth and He knew He would be taken by His enemies and would soon die on the cross. How would we feel if we were in that position? Would we want to hide ourselves away and try to protect ourselves in such a devastating situation? Who knows how we would react? Jesus however wanted to make sure that His followers were prepared, not only for His death and resurrection, but for the glorious hope that one day He would return to the earth to take those who loved Him to be with Him forever.

Shortly after this time at the Last Supper, Jesus also spoke to comfort His disciples, to reassure them that, although He was leaving them for a while, he would not forget them. He said, speaking of heaven, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.'

## THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM

In Luke's gospel, before Jesus spoke of His second coming, He foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the enemies of the Jews, the Romans. Jesus described this as a very difficult time for those who would live through it. It would be especially difficult for the more vulnerable people like women who were pregnant or nursing their babies. Some people would flee to the mountains to escape and the Jews would be taken captive and scattered among the nations. This terrifying time took place in AD 70 and was a type or picture of the second coming which will be a terrifying time for those who have lived for themselves and chosen to reject Jesus.

## COSMIC SIGNS

Jesus went on to predict what would happen before His coming again to the earth. His coming would be preceded by various cosmic signs which would be seen in the disturbance of sun, moon and stars, the roaring of the sea and waves. These signs would cause great fear among unbelievers, but for the followers of Jesus, they would be the occasion for great joy as they would indicate Jesus' imminent return. After these signs, Jesus (or as He describes Himself, 'the Son of Man') would appear 'in a cloud with power and great glory.' The prophet Daniel described the return of Jesus, centuries before His first coming, saying:

*'I saw one like a human being  
Coming with the clouds of heaven.  
And He came to the Ancient One  
And was presented before Him.'*

Rather than being downcast or fearful, in contrast to those who have rejected Jesus, we, His followers, are to take heart because our redemption is drawing near.

Christians here and now have already been redeemed by Jesus from sin and death, but the apostle Paul says that we and all creation await 'the redemption of our bodies' (Rom 8:23) when through the death and resurrection of Jesus, we shall be made perfect in every way and will no longer struggle as we now do with sin.

Jesus gave an earthly example or picture to make His point. When we look at a fig tree, or indeed any (deciduous) tree, and see that it is sprouting leaves, we know that summer

is near. Similarly, when people see the signs of the disturbance of the earth, they know that God's kingdom (or the coming of Jesus) is near. The generation that sees these signs will not pass away until they see the coming of Jesus in glory.

## OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS' TEACHING

Throughout history, many have been fascinated with the second coming of Jesus and many have wrongly tried to predict a date. Jesus said no-one knows the exact date except God the Father. We should not be preoccupied with dates but rather our response should be to live holy lives, which is the true and best way to prepare ourselves for Jesus' return.

Jesus said we were to 'be on guard' and to be 'alert at all times'. These words suggest expectancy. The person on guard suspects someone might try to disturb the peace and is ready to respond if that should happen. The person who is alert is waiting and prepared for something to happen, and we too need to be prepared for our Lord's return.

## HOLY LIVES

Jesus goes on to say that those who are waiting for Him should avoid dissipation, drunkenness and concentrating so much on the worries of this life, that our attention is turned away from spiritual things and a life of holiness, to the things of this world. We may not have a problem with alcohol, but anything in this world that takes too much of our time and attention may become an idol that turns our hearts away from the spiritual. Money, the internet, the television are all good things but they should be our servants rather than our masters. Some who were Christians have spent their time and energy in 'getting ahead' financially and have lost their love for the Lord. It can be very subtle. For those who have lost their love of the Lord through things like this or even focusing too much on the worries of this life, the Day of the Lord (or the return of Jesus) could come unexpectedly just as an animal being caught in a trap did not expect to be caught in that way.

As Christians, we should remember that Jesus could come back at any time and Jesus reminded His followers to 'be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.' It is good to avoid those things that would keep us from the Lord, and faithful praying will give us the strength to avoid those things and to focus on Jesus. I've heard of more than one study which found that those who prayed regularly were more likely to be self-controlled when faced with temptation.

It's good to have regular prayer times, night and morning, not in a legalistic way, but as a way of keeping in touch with the Lord. Reading God's word with an open heart, also keeps our minds focused on the truths of God. Meeting together as we are now for worship also strengthens us spiritually.

## EAGER TO HEAR JESUS

Jesus at this time was teaching in the temple in Jerusalem each day and in the evening He would go off and spend the night on the Mount of Olives. Luke tells us that the people would come early in the morning to listen to Jesus teaching in the temple. May we be like them in their desire to hear more and more from Jesus.

In our reading tonight from Thessalonians, we read that the apostle Paul prayed night and morning. He also encouraged his readers to abound in love for each other. As we practise showing love, not as a feeling but as a decision with God's help, the temptations of this world become more distant. Paul concludes this chapter by writing, 'And may (the Lord) so strengthen your hearts in holiness, that you may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints.'

May we all be ready for the return of our wonderful Lord Jesus!

*Helen McAlley*

## Advent 2

8th December 2024

Philippians 1:1–11; Luke 3:1–6

*Sermon by Denise Nicholls*

## Philippians 1:1–11

*1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,**To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:**<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**<sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you.**<sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**<sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.**<sup>8</sup> God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.**<sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.*

## Luke 3:1–6

*3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene – <sup>2</sup> during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. <sup>3</sup> He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>4</sup> As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:**'A voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
"Prepare the way for the Lord,  
make straight paths for him."**<sup>5</sup> Every valley shall be filled in,  
every mountain and hill made low.**The crooked roads shall become straight,  
the rough ways smooth.**<sup>6</sup> And all people will see God's salvation."*

The Scouts' motto was, and is, 'Be prepared'. Restaurants get ready for service by their *mise en place*, where they prep all the little bits of food that they will need so that service is as smooth as it can be made. Even today, there are videos that you can watch on 'meal prepping', which is showing people how to prepare a week's worth of meals, or to cook in bulk and freeze things, that people of our age have known for a long time, but it's now quite a new thing as well.

But we all have preparation of things that we do every day: daily, weekly, hourly tasks that require being prepared. When we get into our shower or bath, we need to have ensured that we have bought soap—or made soap, if you still make soap, which most of us don't anymore—and have the required shampoos. When we get out and grab our towel, we need to make sure that that's been washed and in place, so we need a preparation for that. When we come to have our breakfast, we need to ensure that we've done the previous preparing of doing the shopping and getting the things that we like for breakfast. For our commute we either need to have ensured that we've been prepared by buying petrol, or putting the money on our Myki.

Well, Sunday mornings for the last about a year and a half, I have been preparing some of the things that we have for the Lord's Supper, on a Saturday night. Because with the extra thing of live streaming, and getting the printing off, and making sure everything is done, it's just a little bit of preparation to set up the Lord's table on a Saturday night without panic, so I can do that, and then at least that part is done and prepared for. And of course when it comes to special occasions, like a wedding, or a baptism, or a big birthday, there are even more preparations.

Being prepared—some people make it look effortless, like they haven't even thought about it, but there has been preparation. Some events we can prepare for, that are planned; but others will come as a shock. I remember when the Queen Mother died at 101, somebody was interviewed on the streets of London and said, 'But it was such a shock!' and I thought, at 101! I didn't think it was a shock—but it is still a shock, no matter how old someone is whom we have loved, when they actually die. There is still that time of shock, whether or not they have prepared for their funeral, and prepared to have everything in place for them.

Advent is our time of preparation for the Lord—the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. So our theme today, is being prepared for that coming day.

So firstly from the letter to the Philippians, that beautiful letter of great encouragement. Paul writes this letter to his friends to encourage them, and from the beginning that we have read today to the end of chapter 4—it's just a short letter, I encourage you to read it if it's been a while since you've read that letter—Paul in one breath praises the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and he moves back and forward between praising God and praising Jesus. And twice in this opening section he mentions a phrase, 'the day of Christ', which for him is that day of promised return of the Risen Lord Jesus, the one who is worshipped and will be worshipped as Lord of all—at whose return, God's people will be like lovely mince Christmas tarts, filled with the fruit (see what I did there) of righteousness through our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul is looking forward to that day and encourages the Philippians to look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus.

We too look forward to the return of the Lord Jesus. It's part of the Good News that the church has preached for 2000 years, and we say it each week in our creeds. But I wonder if our population around us, who are

embracing Christmas and even Easter with great gusto, and decorations, and food, and special feasts—they're very good on things like Christmas and Easter—but I think if we said to the average Aussie in the street, 'What about the return of Jesus as Judge?', I think they would think we were part of the lunatic fringe of the church.

But it's not. It's part of solid Christian doctrine for the last 2000 years that we look forward to the return of Jesus. For those of us who trust in him, to whom God has shown his mercy and grace by giving us the gift of faith, he gives us that faith so that we know that we are prepared because of Jesus' salvation for us.

So we are prepared for the return of the Lord Jesus. And we encourage each other, as that day approaches: that day of Christ.

Which brings us to our Gospel reading about John the Proclaimer, John the Baptist, whom the church has always insisted is the character of Advent, of the Advent drama. But when we think about it—I wonder who has put up their Christmas tree yet? A few people have put up their Christmas trees, yes. Have you got a decoration of John the Baptist on your Christmas tree? Well we usually have like, you know, some fairies or angels or really cute little cherubs—and they're lovely—but I think John: when we think of him and his adult ministry, as someone dressed in camels' hair clothing and eating bugs—yeah, he's a bit out there, isn't he?

He's a bit out there, is John. He's the messy one, the untidy one, the dangerous political one who says outrageous things, and says, 'Everybody, get prepared!' As John proclaimed the Lord Jesus as the Lamb of God, as the Son of God who takes away the sin of the world, he said to even the religious people, 'You are all steeped in sin! Come back to God and repent!' To the powerful—the political leaders who were mentioned in our Gospel reading during that time when John was around—he even confronted them—and ended up beheaded because of his confrontation of religious leaders and their outrageous behaviour.

But John's message was for all people: the religious, the non-religious, all people of the world. He said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!' He was the one who prepared the way, and his message was for all people. Going back to the idea of preparation, John was the ultimate prepper.

Have you heard of people today who refer to themselves as doomsday preppers? You might have—there was even a TV series a little while ago—but these are people who are convinced that the end of the world is coming soon, and so have stored up supplies in their home—canned goods—waiting for the coming apocalypse. And they have done everything that they can do to make their home ready—not only in America, but a lot of the doomsday preppers are in America and have a great distrust of government. They arm themselves: they think, 'every person for themselves'.

Now it's not only in America: my very good friend is married to a lovely bloke, a very smart bloke who's just finished his PhD; but they have backpacks in an area in their garage, and I said to my friend, 'Oh is that for

when you go camping?' She said, 'No, that's my husband, that's for—we've got lots of canned goods and other stuff there, so that if we need it we can survive for about a month without going out, and if we need to go anywhere, we've got all camping gear and stuff . . .' And I went, 'Oh, okay'. She said, 'Yeah he's a bit crazy like that, but he's mostly fine . . .'

But going back to John the Baptist—in a time and place that's mentioned in the Scriptures, under the regime of the Romans and the Jewish leaders in control, his message for everyone was, 'Be prepared!' And how you were to be prepared, was to repent. For there was one coming whose sandals he was not fit to untie.

John's message was in line with the Old Testament prophets, who called on people to repent, to prepare for God's coming among them, who longed for the return of the glory of the Lord. John's message that he proclaimed was for all people. He proclaimed that he was not the Messiah, but the one preparing the way for Jesus, the son of God.

And we know that, yes, that day of the return of the Lord Jesus is still some time in the future. We don't know when. Today or tomorrow—we don't know. But we're to be prepared.

The great thing is: Jesus has already prepared us; for he has made us his brothers and sisters. We are children of God.

Well, as we prepare for coming events—notably Christmas—in this Advent season, we call to the front of our minds—even though it's something that we know—we bring to the forefront of our minds—by lighting our Advent candles, by reminding ourselves that Jesus is coming again—we bring to the front of our minds that this Lord Jesus, who came as a babe in Bethlehem, who died on the cross, and was brought back to life again, and is now seated at the right hand of God: that this same Lord Jesus will come again as Judge and King and Lord of all. And as God's people, we long for that day. We long for that day, when the Scriptures also tell us that as well as every knee bowing, and every tongue confessing that he is Lord to the glory of God the Father, and every tear will be wiped away, we with the church of old will use that ancient prayer *Maranatha*, as we say, 'Come, Lord Jesus!'

So be prepared, and also pray; and be encouraged that our Lord Jesus has already filled us, like little mince pies, filled with the fruit of righteousness, because of what he has done for us. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

## Advent 3

15th December 2024

Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:7-20

Sermon by Denise Nicholls

### Philippians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.



**Luke 3:7–20**

<sup>7</sup> John said to the crowds coming out to be baptised by him, 'You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?'

<sup>8</sup> Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. <sup>9</sup> The axe has been laid to the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.'

<sup>10</sup> 'What should we do then?' the crowd asked.

<sup>11</sup> John answered, 'Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.'

<sup>12</sup> Even tax collectors came to be baptised. 'Teacher,' they asked, 'what should we do?'

<sup>13</sup> 'Don't collect any more than you are required to,' he told them.

<sup>14</sup> Then some soldiers asked him, 'And what should we do?'

He replied, 'Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay.'

<sup>15</sup> The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. <sup>16</sup> John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. <sup>17</sup> His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' <sup>18</sup> And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

<sup>19</sup> But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, <sup>20</sup> Herod added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.

Well, we are in the season of peace, hope and joy, and we invite and welcome people to come and celebrate the birth of Jesus with us. We have our boards up at Holy Spirit and here to welcome people to church, and say, 'Please, come and join with us'. But you won't hear me saying on Christmas Eve, 'You brood of vipers! What are you doing here at church? Who told you to come? Go away!' We don't often say that, do we? Well, I don't think I've ever heard a preacher say that at all.

But that's what John said, when people were coming out to be baptised in the Jordan by him. It doesn't sound very welcoming, does it? It doesn't sound very sensitive to the needs of his hearers. This is real fire-and-brimstone preaching we have from John the Baptist.

But Luke's gospel tells us that John's message was, and is, Good News. Today we're going to look briefly at both passages that were read for us today—about John the Baptist, and also about St Paul's instruction to his friends in Philippi to rejoice—and we're going to think about how these two fit together for us today, as we celebrate the joy that we have in Christ.

Well first of all, John the Baptist, our Advent figure, who had by this time, when people were pouring out of the cities and towns to see him, become a bit of a celebrity in his day. People had come out to see the latest holy man in the desert with his unusual clothing and diet and his fierce preaching—people wanted to hear him. Even though his message was from God, he was still regarded as a bit 'out there', a bit sort of on the lunatic fringe of the believers of God.

For John said to the people, if you come for baptism, don't come just as a religious rite, or to 'do the right thing' or 'to be done'. Don't come because this is the latest fad for people. Being baptised by John, he expected that as he announced God's kingdom and God's ways, that this would be life-altering, life-changing for the people. And that's why he said to them, don't just come and do the 'religious thing'—live it out in your lives, by producing fruit in keeping with repentance.

To those who stood upon their religious piety, or the fact that they had been Jews for generations, or had a family connection, John says, No! God is not limited by you and your family connections. God can raise up more children for Abraham even out of rocks. Don't regard yourself and your historic lineage as being a Jew—in those days; or we would say being in a Christian family—don't regard that as your 'badge of merit'. For he says to all, there is a reckoning coming, for all people.

But still they came. They came to hear John and to be baptised. Some did engage further with John about what he meant. I read one commentator who said, 'Well, John was sort of a bit of a 'life coach' in our terms today; or an 'ethical consultant'. How should the people of God be living their lives? People came and asked him for advice on how they particularly should live their lives.

Now all of us, I hope, have a doctor that we go to, and if we're wise we will listen to what the doctor says to us, so that we have our best health. Some of us will have a financial advisor, or a personal trainer at the gym. We might have someone we can ring at Centrelink, or speak to a friend with great experience. So individuals came to John as well. People heard John's message of getting ready for God's kingdom—repent and turn to God, be baptised, and, as John said, get your life in order.

Individuals came to him and said, 'What should we do?' To the crowd, John answered, 'Care for others'. To the tax collectors—remember they were the people on the margins of society, the collaborators with the Romans—John says to them, when they say, 'Well, what should we do to follow God's ways?', he says, 'Don't steal, or extort money'. Even Roman soldiers—the occupying force—who had heard the message asked John, 'What should we do?', and John answers, 'Don't misuse your power'.

Note the people who were coming to John: the crowds, and the outcasts, and the enemy. His message, and God's message, was for all people. What does the Lord require of you? John says, 'Be generous, now; be merciful, now; do justice, now'. Which prompted some of the people to think, maybe this one, maybe this John, is the Messiah—and John says, no way, it's not him. Someone is coming who is more powerful than him; someone whose baptism will be marked by fire, not by water; someone who will bring his winnowing fork—that image of sorting out the wheat from the chaff: the God who will bring God's justice.

John preached the fullness of God's news, justice and judgement, but you know his very call was God's grace to all people: to hear God's welcome, and to note God's welcome to them. But not everyone accepted the call into God's kingdom, and John's call to welcome the Messiah. Such as King Herod, a Jew himself; someone who was powerful, a bit of

a puppet king put there by the Romans. We heard in the last couple of verses that Olive read for us that John was put in prison. So John was imprisoned by King Herod, and we know later that he was executed by that same King Herod.

A bit of a downer was John: 'You brood of vipers!'—and it got him into trouble.

But then St Paul, himself in prison, writes to his friends and says, 'Rejoice! Rejoice in the message that you have received about Jesus'. He writes to his friends living in Philippi, in a Roman colony. They had learned of God's mercy and justice and kindness, and they had put their faith in Jesus, and come to believe in the crucified and risen Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. And Paul's message to them was, 'Rejoice! Rejoice!' And he says it twice: 'I'll say it again, rejoice! Rejoice in knowing that you are known by God, that you are in God's family'. And to them he says, 'Let your gentleness be your character. Be trusting in God. Overrule your anxiety. Be prayerful; and the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds'.

Today is known as Joy Sunday because of this reading. Rejoice! Be joyful in God: the joy of knowing and being known by God, and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul also says to his friends, 'The Lord is near'. Now there's been debate over the years whether that means—I am near in proximity, spatially, to Katrina—whether Jesus is near you physically; or whether the Lord was near in time: whether he was going to be coming again very soon. In Advent we look forward to the Lord Jesus' coming again. When we think about the Lord's being near, of course we think about the Incarnation and Christmas that we will celebrate in ten days' time. That's when God came near to us through his Son. And Jesus is now still near to his people by the Holy Spirit, and he is near to us.

So as God's people on this third Advent Sunday, we can rejoice that our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life, as we're told in the Book of Revelation. We can rejoice that as we observe Advent, and hear John's straightforward and fire-and-brimstone message, that the celebration of Christmas is Christ's Incarnation, where God came very near to us. We can celebrate that Christ is near us by his Spirit, and rejoice that Christ is near as his coming again.

So friends today, I say to us, as the Apostle Paul said to the friends at Philippi: 'Rejoice! I will say it again: rejoice! The Lord is near!' Amen.

**Advent 4**

22nd December 2024

**Service of Nine Lessons and Eleven Carols**

*Sermon by Denise Nicholls*

Denise told the story of the three trees. There are a number of versions of this story, but Denise's version is from 'A Tale of Three Trees: A Traditional Folktale, Retold by Angela Elwell Hunt, Illustrations by Tim Jonke'. The publication history is complicated, but identical hard-cover editions were published by Lion on 30 Sept 1989, and David C Cook on 1 Oct 1989. A simplified board book was published by David C Cook on 1 Feb 2001.

A synopsis of the story can be found at <https://bible.org/illustration/story-three-trees>

# Parish Council Notes

## Meeting of Monday 25th November

### Ministry matters

- APM 17 Nov: most council members reappointed. After one year's enforced sabbatical, Emmi Godau back as Treasurer. *Babble* report.
- Belinda elected to assist Denise on 2025 Parish Roll committee.
- Set next year's APM for 16 November 2025.
- Denise thanked Rhonda for liaising with report writers, presentation of documents at APM.
- Facilitating employment of the curate couple next year. We'll be responsible for finding and funding local rental accommodation for their choice of school catchment area. Prepare documentation for paying allowances.
- BCA's commercial lease agreement: draft prepared by a solicitor at Rigby Cooke Lawyers, submitted to Legal Counsel: Property at diocese. When finalised, to Archdeacon and Bishop.

### Finance reports

- Extra council meeting held 3 Nov to discuss and approve budget for 2024/25 for APM.
- Noted there had been no handover from Glenn to Emmi prior to tonight's meeting.
- Finance reports appeared to contain a number of discrepancies which had to be resolved and therefore could not be accepted.
- Agreement with St Peter's still needs their input.
- DAA continues to pay monthly on invoice.

### St John's

- Following extensive storms/rainfall, some surface areas of car park have developed small ruts. Request for examination and advice will be sent to DNA Constructions through architect.
- Kaye and Rosemary have spent much time and effort re-arranging & decorating car park.
- Architects who specialise in heritage architecture have started examining church building: will make recommendations.

### St Andrew's

- Awaiting settlement in April 2025.
- At its meeting in November, AiC didn't approve our proposal for >50% of proceeds.
- As we are facing many large invoices for St John's, Bishop Brad will be approached re release of our proportion of deposit payment for St Andrew's sale.

### Diocesan professional standards

- All existing volunteers & lay workers have now completed required compliance certificates.
- Most need to undertake either Induction or Refresher training. The latter will take place early next year. Belinda and Mercy need to do induction training ASAP.
- All parishes must work through Child Abuse Risk Management Tool at least annually: early next year.

### Vicar's report

- APM: Thankful for those who offered to serve. The engagement of folk in our parish is encouraging. Good humour of all always appreciated.
- I am feeling SO much more 'myself', better every week.
- I am excited about 2025, especially our new curate couple joining us from 19 Jan, and the HOPE25 evangelism focus.
- Denise indicated the dates and times of her regular Diocesan commitments.
- Christmas services have been determined and will be advertised.

### Wardens' report

- Concrete kerb tripping hazard at St John's removed. Original storm water drains along driveway cleared of roots and silt. Two extra bollards installed between disabled car park & steps to deck. Final planting of indigenous plants.
- Very grateful to the Department of Justice Community Service team who worked hard in the St John's grounds for a day — the grass looked beautiful after they'd mowed.

### General business

- Approached Wilson Parking for advice re options for introducing a system for paid public car parking.

## Meeting of Monday 9th December

### Ministry matters

- A Birch Trust grant has been given to us & Greensborough to support shared employment of a married curate couple next year: Xiaoxi & Weiyi Lou, with children Charlie and Charlotte, ½ time at Greensborough, ½ with us.
- Their stipends will be paid by Greensborough. Superannuation and removal costs shared 50/50. Banyule will pay their rent, utilities and travel. Employment documentation finalised.
- Kaye and Rhonda, after advice on school catchment and many inspections, found a unit in Lower Plenty Road, Rosanna. Bond and first month's rent paid.
- The Lous will move to Rosanna early January, and probably start work mid-January.
- Banyule to set up Field Committee for Xiaoxi.
- BCA lease approved by Archdeacon Tim and Bishop Brad. Just needs final tick from Legal Counsel – Property at the Diocese.

### Finance report

- Emmi received handover from Glenn. Becoming more used to the Xero accounting system. Reports discussed. Emmi able to answer some queries, others for next meeting.
- A very large invoice for three architects who have been working on St John's is expected before Christmas—use a combination of St John's Restoration account and Crystal Dunn Bequest.

### St John's

- Complaints from neighbours and tenants of St John's re dust from surface of car park. This, drainage and other matters require discussion between architect & DNA on remediation.
- Report and recommendations expected soon from the heritage architects who examined the church building.

### St Andrew's

- Diocese referred to us a letter sent to the Archbishop, a complaint re the tardiness of the St Andrew's Memorial Garden reconstruction. Responded: process is long and involved (Heritage Victoria Permit application, building permit request, construction). Doing all we can, but it will take at least another two years.

### Diocesan professional standards

- Changes by the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission to Crimcheck applications take effect on 1 January, 2025.

### Vicar's report

- Some new people at St John's.
- HUGE thanks to Kaye and Rhonda for finding accommodation for the Lous.
- Visited two unwell members.
- Two coffee meetings with young adult women re spiritual matters.
- Christmas services boards up both churches. Invitation cards distributed this week for people to invite friends and neighbours.
- Jeslyn Johnson volunteering in office this week to work on Diocesan compliance register.
- DAA concerts yesterday: costumes and props should be cleared in the next week or so.
- Bee-keepers last Thursday night, installation of security cameras on hives.
- Last two visits to Roshana at Macleod had other activities on, no communication. Christmas visit 3 pm 18/12.
- Christmas Service Strathalan 2 pm 16/12.
- Christmas Cheer at vicarage 14 Dec, 3–6 pm.
- Denise's dad Wally arrives 13 Dec for 3½ weeks.
- Christmas and beyond: service leaders and musicians determined and advised.

### Wardens' report

- AESC, on behalf of Diocese, inspected bell tower for safety and compliance.
- Beekeepers have requested the use of power and wi-fi for hive surveillance they are installing.
- Work started handrail to Community Garden.
- Steps to deck. Final indigenous planting.

### General business

- Diocese's Property Management integrating a new property management system—requires research and submission of many documents.

*Minutes by Rhonda Taylor, précis by Editor*



A man walked into a church on crutches, stopped in front of the holy water, splashed some on his legs and then tossed his crutches aside. An altar boy who witnessed the man's actions ran to tell the priest what had happened. The priest said, "Son you have just witnessed a miracle. Where is this man now?" The altar boy replied, "Lying on the floor next to the holy water."

A parishioner asked his minister, "Is it proper for a man to profit from the mistakes of another?" "Definitely not," the minister answered. "Are you certain?" the parishioner continued. "Absolutely," the minister replied. "In that case," the man said, "I wonder if you'd mind returning the fifty dollars I gave you after my wedding last year?"

<https://maaw.info/GadgetsandGames/ChurchJokes.htm>