

PRESBYTERY PORT PHILLIP WEST

DECEMBER 3RD 2020 - NEWSLETTER NO.21



Advent: the coming of Christ and the arrival of the gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Jeanne Beale (Presbytery Minister)

On Tuesday I officiated at the funeral of a good friend, and in the preparation for this service I was reflecting on how hard this year of restrictions has been for those of us who have experienced the death of loved ones. Whilst it is never good to lose a loved one, the extra complications this pandemic has thrown at us has added extra stress and pain to an already traumatic time.

The Bible Reading chosen for the funeral was Paul's letter to the Corinthians on the importance of Love: 1 Corinthians 13: 4-8 & 13.

We are very familiar with the ancient words, "Love is patient; love is kind it bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. .. And now three things remain, faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love."

My homily was in two segments, the first a focus on love; sharing that I believe that an encounter with love is an encounter with the essence of God. The second was on hope; sharing that if we believed that death simply marked the end of life, then we would be left without hope.



It got me to thinking, where would we be in our grief situations without these gifts of hope, peace, joy and love? Words like devastated, helpless, hopeless, lost and empty come to mind, and whilst these may be my initial reactions to grief, the ability to then draw upon the Advent gifts makes the transition bearable. So many in our communities are not aware of these gifts to draw upon. Many of our congregations have been reaching new people through on-line worship, which means, this year that we have had the opportunity to share the good news afresh.

How can we be more intentional this Christmas about sharing the gifts of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love?

Advent News



Mental Health Matters

Rev Fiona Bottcher [Deacon]

I had the worst writer's block trying to put this article together. I was hoping to craft a reflection on what it might mean to be "midwives of grief" as we move into this season of advent.

I wanted to speak of the hope we might find as we wait in that gap between the promise of what will be and the reality of this year of grief and loss. But it just wasn't working.

I sighed and shut my laptop in frustration. My son Jack turned and smiled, his eyes searching mine. Jack often "forgets" that living with autism means he's not supposed to "do" eye contact. He gently pressed his lips against my forehead, "forgetting" that he's also not "meant" to "get" emotions.

We started to play a familiar game that Jack often initiates when there's need for calm. His head moves side to side as his chin brushes over my eyelids and cheeks. We copy each other's coos and giggles as we "bop" the tips of our noses together and my frustration melts away. There is only this moment as we hug, his head resting in the crook of my neck.

Advent hope in this very moment.



Advent Bear Hunt

Mel Perkins (eLM Leadership Development: Lay Leadership)

Advent bear hunt: Do you have a bear sitting in your window, on your veranda or somewhere visible from the street? Perhaps your bear might like to hold these things as symbols and signs for others during advent:

Week 1: *butterfly* – joy – the brilliance of colour, shape and movement of butterflies is a joyous sight to behold! Where are the spaces of joy for you and others? How can you offer and share joy with others? Who could you share joy with this week?

Week 2: *candle* – hope – a lighted candle in a widow in times past was a source of hope and home to a weary traveller. Where are the places of hope for you this Advent? How can you offer hope to others? Is there someone you know who seems tired or losing hope?

Week 3: *box* – love – boxes at Christmas from those we love often bring surprises! This past year has been one of surprises – some good and some incredibly challenging. Where have been the places where you have been surprised by love in the past year? How can you surprise others by love this Advent? Who have you been thinking about who might appreciate a token of love?

Week 4: *star* – peace – Christ came to bring peace to a troubled world. While our world still contains trouble, there is also peace to be found in the One who offers us Life. Where have you found peace this past year and Advent? How can you be a source of peace to others? Who can you offer peace or a calming presence to this week?



Advent-Waiting and Watching

Mel Perkins (eLM Leadership Development: Lay Leadership)

While we recognise that Christ has already come, there is also a sense that God continues to come to us, again and again. And so traditionally, the liturgical season of **Advent is recognised as an intentional time of prayer, watching, and waiting for the (re-)coming of the One who dwells within us.**

Often in a busy and noisy world, we need to be quiet and still to listen for God within our lives, and to see the movement of the Spirit in the world. One of the ways we can do this is to watch and wait and observe the natural environment around us.

In Australia, the seasons are determined by months of the year and come from a British heritage. But for the First Peoples of the lands on which we live, the seasons are named based on reflection of the movement of the natural world – the land, rivers, ocean, sky, and their creatures. This reflection came through observation, interaction, and deep connection.



Emu in the Sky by Kyle Pickett

The lands and nations of what are now known as Victoria and Tasmania are varied with distinct seasons. For example, the season of Advent coincides with different seasons in different places: for some of the Kulin nation, what is now known as Central Victoria and Greater Melbourne, this time is the changing of the season of the Grass Flowering Season into the Kangaroo Apple Season; for the people of the Jardwadjali and Djab Wurrung, the traditional peoples of the Gariwerd region (Grampians), this is the Ballambar, Season of butterflies.

As I have changed my garden over to indigenous plants (ones native to the area in which I live), I have taken time to slow down and observe the surrounding natural environment. What do different plants need to thrive – sun/shade, etc? What do the creatures of this place need for food/shelter/moisture? I have not lived here long, and I don't always correctly interpret what I see and hear! So, I also need to listen to the wisdom of others and be open to hearing that beside my own listening. It has also been lovely to interact with my neighbours more as I work in re-creating my front garden. Having simple chats about gardens, pets, COVID and the neighbourhood has been re-creating in a personal way, and something we all need, not just during challenging times such as these.

What is happening around *you* this Advent as you watch and wait for the Christ-child to once again come and pitch his tent amongst us? What changes do you observe in your local environment? A great way to do this is through bushwalking, going to a local park, or even gardening at your place. **Take time to slow down and watch and wait, observing the changes around you, big and small, quick and slow. Breathe in the movement of the Spirit!**

PPW Post Card

Airport West Uniting Church FaceBook

In the last two years we've portrayed the Advent story in drawings on the inside of our windows; this year, we've begun to track the story on the outside...

*Come surely, Lord Jesus, as dawn follows night,
our hearts long to greet you, as roses, the light.
Salvation, draw near us, our vision engage.
One candle is lit for the hope of the age.*

Words: Mary Anne Parrott



Prayer

Ministry Team Prayers...

Dear God,
We ask that You be there for us,
as you were for our ancestors,
a pillar in our midst.

Help us to turn to You, God,
for guidance today and
Give us strength for the weeks ahead.

Help us to reach out in love and compassion
to one another,
to support those who are ill,
unable to leave their homes,
or who are struggling financially.

Be with our doctors and caregivers,
our nurses and scientists,
as they are working to develop a vaccine
and care for those who are ill.

Be with all who are ill and their families,
offering them Your compassion.
And, we pray, Your healing.

Be with our leaders.
Guide them to wise decisions
Be with us as we wake up to adventure.

Be with us God.
Help us to find the inner strength
to be patient when our nerves are tested.

Be our Still Waters
when we are surrounded by fear
and anxiety.

Be our Rock, to Whom we can turn
and give our worry and fears.

Be our Shelter.
Guide our steps
and keep us safe.
Help us to feel Your presence in these times
of change. **Amen**

Heather Loader

**Each Congregation MUST Submit
COVID Safe Plans to Synod.**

**No FOOD HANDLING Allowed in
Churches yet.**

"Holy Communion is possible with
careful planning which maintains all
distancing, hygiene and no food sharing
requirements." (See Congregation
Group Permitted Activity Guide.) Pls
consider 'Open Hand Liturgy'.

SYNOD COVID links

Recovery Action Plan Check List
FAQ's Vic Regional & Metro Melbourne
Church Facilities reopening Check List
Visitor Contact Logs
Cleaning Info Sheets

<https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/>
Check Regularly!



Our theme this time is Advent

Week 4 - Advent 3 – Luke 1:46b-55
Week 5 – Advent 4 - Luke 2:1-20

It is hoped that entries can be used across the
presbytery to assist with illustration for worship services
and other church activities. To achieve this, entries
need to be in by the Thursday prior to the relevant
Sunday.

Week 4 entries are due in by 5pm on Thurs 10th Dec
Week 5 entries are due in by 5pm on Thurs 17th of Dec
*Just post your entries on this Regenerating the Church
Facebook page for all to see. **Jeanne***

Advent Hymn: You betta watch Out!

N & C Collas - Sung to 'Santa Claus is coming to Town'

You better watch out, you better not cry,
You won't know the hour or the day he will come
but Jesus Christ is coming back soon.

The sun will go dark
The mountains will quake
the stars will be falling
and angels go calling
'cause Jesus Christ is coming back soon

He sees you when you're sleeping
He knows when you're awake
He said to be on guard and to prepare for his return
So You better watch out, you better not cry,
You won't know the hour or the day he will come
but Jesus Christ is coming back soon.

You better watch out, you better not cry,
You're gonna find out that outcast or not,
Jesus Christ has come for you.

He wants us to be living his way
watching and waiting, keeping awake
Jesus Christ is coming for you

His presence comes to each of us
to change, renew, restore
He knows if we need hope or joy
so expect to be amazed

You better watch out, You better not cry,
You better not pout,
I'm telling you why
Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Amen

Musical Moments

PPW POSTCARD

Winchelsea Uniting Church

Presents local Pianist

John Bumford

with

Happy Birthday Beethoven

(250 years young)



at the Church on

Wednesday December 9th @ 7.00pm

Thursday December 10th @ 7.00pm

Friday December 11th @ 7.00pm

Saturday December 12th @ 4.30pm

Bookings Essential: ph. 0419 535 490

Admission: \$25

Proceeds to the Church

Advent and the Missional Church

Rev. Narelle Collas (Presbytery Minister)

Do you love it when the shops start playing Christmas Carols and music? Is that Advent for us? Is this Christian season of Advent really relevant in our current society anyway? The bible readings and some of the songs are not for the faint hearted. I have heard someone say "How can you justify focusing worship on such an irrelevant ancient tradition? What does this season have to do with being a missional church ?

One of the difficulties of the Advent-Christmas season is a temptation to revert to sentimental images of a sweet baby in a manger who has little to do with the real world of refugees, taxes, and foreign occupation. We get caught up in the lush sounds of highly-polished choirs and bands and forget how politically potent was the angel's song of "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). Because the season often centres on children (the more angelic-looking, the better), we fail to remember that the Babe of Bethlehem was "destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34).

Perhaps the character of Advent shines most clearly in the music. Look, for example, at the chant that traditionally ushers in the season in many congregations, "O come, O come, Immanuel". The opening unison lines may lull us into nostalgia--but only if we aren't paying attention.

The text pleads for captive people to be delivered from their slavery--as missional a goal as one could find. The urgency of the cry is emphasized by a powerful melody that builds and explodes in an ecstatic refrain anticipating the liberation of God's people: "Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel shall come to You, O Israel."

What if a worship leader invited the congregation to imagine singing this cry for liberation alongside refugees still languishing in Nauru or in PNG or in a drug infested or disadvantaged neighbourhood in our city? Would it make a difference?

Many of our songs and readings focus on the Lord's Coming such as "Hark, the glad sound", (TiS 269) this hymn spells out Jesus' clear understanding of God's mission in the world--releasing prisoners from bondage, enriching the humble poor, remitting the debts of all who cannot pay. With its repetitions and driving energy, the tune creates momentum for joining God's liberating, healing work in the world. What if a minister introduced this song as a battle cry for freedom?

Many people sing our traditional carols during Advent and I wonder when we do if we bring out the missional aspects of these carols. For example, as Christmas approaches, could you plan to include communion as a response to a sermon. Invite worshippers to come forward to receive the bread and cup as they sing an amazingly fitting text such as "O little town of Bethlehem":



*How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of the heav'ns.
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.*

The West Indian carol, "The virgin Mary had a baby boy", offers an entirely different sound and rhythm for worship. As worshipers sing, "Oh, yes! believer! He comes from the glory, he comes from the glorious kingdom," the music itself could strengthen their commitment to Jesus' reign.

What is the connection between the Advent-Christmas season and a missional church? In the gift of Jesus, God has made the ultimate "missional" gesture toward humankind. A babe wrapped in swaddling clothes is God's tender and tough response to the aching needs of our world.

The tender babe will grow up to become a gentle, compassionate Saviour; the tender babe will also grow up to become a fearless prophet proclaiming God's vision for justice and righteousness in the world.

The glorious gift of music during this season offers a fresh revelation of God's purposes for the world. Singing with passion and power, worshippers are filled with wonder as they receive God's gracious gift. Then, in concert with the heavenly hosts whose praise filled earth and sky, the church is energized to join with God's loving, healing and restoring work in the world.

Might worshippers get the connection between Advent and God's mission if Advent hymns were sung on other Sundays that proclaim the church's call to witness and peacemaking?