



Anam Cara Community

Waterholes: 18 February 2017



Sunset, Tanna. Photo Ann Miller

Welcome

Welcome to Waterholes, the Anam Cara Community newsletter for the week beginning 19th February 2017.

Why this newsletter? This newsletter is one of the ways by which we hope to promote community. The Anam Cara Community is intended to be much more than simply a group of likeminded people. We hope it will continue to grow into a community that is a sign of God's presence in and love for the world, a dispersed community of contemplatives whose lives and action bring peace and healing to all of God's children. We are a Community of Prayer, and believe that as we pray together, God calls us deeper into fellowship with one another.

Who is welcome? The Anam Cara Community is proud to welcome anyone, from any background or faith community (or none!). We are an open and inclusive community that affirms the dignity and worth of all humans, the value of the environment, and seeks to model a way of living with one another and the world that points to the love and care of God for everyone. Individuals who wish to formally join the Community are welcome to become associates.

Community News

Opportunities for Spiritual Nurturing in the Gippsland Diocese

At our recent meeting of the Servant Leadership of the Community we were delighted to receive information from The Rev'd Ken Parker, locum at Bunyip parish, regarding two Quiet Days he is facilitating in the parish. This promoted some discussion around the way in which we could support the ministry of others who are offering opportunities for spiritual nurture in their parishes that they are happy to open up to others.

If your parish offers a Meditation group or is planning a Quiet Day and you would like us to include details in Waterholes we will now include a new section in Waterholes, 'Further Opportunities for Spiritual Nurture'. Our diocese covers a large geographical area and opportunities to intentionally seek times of silence, reflection and contemplation are not always available. We trust that this may give people further options to nurture their spiritual growth. Previously we have advertised coming events at the Abbey of St Barnabas, these will now fit into this section.

Please contact me if you would like me to include your information in Waterholes.

See the new section following today's Reflections to read details of the first Quiet Day Ken has planned for people in the Bunyip area!

Prayers

We also discussed the Prayers section in Waterholes. As a contemplative community we are people of prayer. Prayer lists are often a challenge and we are well aware that many people either through their parishes or through their personal prayer are well informed in bringing the concerns of the world and our nation before God. We have therefore decided to shorten our list for now by deleting these points. Please give us your feedback and any requests for prayer that you would like included.

Subscriptions - Thank you to those who have responded to our reminder about Membership Subscriptions and have renewed your memberships to the Community for 2017. Your commitment is an encouragement to us as we seek to grow community and it also allows us to offer further ministry through your financial contribution.

Photos - Thank you to Ann Miller who sent us today's photo offerings... more are always welcomed!

Coming Community Events

Date for your diary:

The first Community QUIET DAY for 2017

ASPECTS OF PRAYER

will be held on

Saturday 18th March 2017

Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Stratford.

9.30/10.00 am – 3.30 pm

Sue Hopkins a Servant Leader of the Community will lead us as we come together to explore the spiritual discipline of prayer.

“I am more and more convicted that without prayer nothing of any value ever comes into being.” *Bishop John McIntyre.*

What to bring: your lunch, pen & notepad.

Tea/coffee/water & Morning Tea provided.

Donations welcomed nil - \$15 depending on means.

To let us know you are planning to attend or for further details, contact:

Jane Macqueen: jemacqueen@gmail.com

Sue Hopkins: 5182 5542

For your Prayers

Part of the joy of the Anam Cara Community is the gift of being called to pray for others. If you would like the Community to pray for you, or for someone else, please email or call Jane ([0411 316 346](tel:0411316346) or jemacqueen@gmail.com) who will add them to the prayer list, and ensure they are included in our roster of prayers.

At present, your prayers are asked for:

- Bishop Kay as she leads our diocese.
- Continued listening in grace and love as the Anglican communion reflects on the decision of the Church of England's General Synod to not accept the report by the House of Bishops that included defining marriage as solely between a man and a woman.
- Sue Hopkins as she prepares for the upcoming Quiet Day on March 18th.
- For Lyndal as she lives with an aggressive form of Motor Neurone Disease and her family in their care for her.
- Associates and Friends who have asked for our prayers: Norma, June and Linda. John who has recently begun another round of chemotherapy and his family, Grace and David.
- For all refugees and asylum seekers that they may find hope and restoration from the despair and persecution from which they have fled.

Prayer of the Day

Hidden God,
whose wisdom compels our love and unsettles all our values:
fill us with desire to search for her truth,
that we may transform the world,
becoming fools for her sake,
through Jesus Christ,
your Word and Wisdom made flesh,
to whom be glory for ever. Amen

Reflection

Rev. Chris Venning, Bendigo
Psalm 119.33-40 Matthew 5.38-48

KINGDOM LIFESTYLE

In praise of God's law (Psalm 119:33-40)

The longest Psalm by far in the Hebrew Scriptures is Psalm 119. It is a tribute to the law of God. Law, to us today, can mean many things – even in the Hebrew and New Testament Scriptures we find many applications and understandings. In Psalms like today's it has a lofty and generous significance. Within the broad sweep of this Psalm it represents God's guidance (verse 105) and instruction (v 99) in a positive sense. It may be straining matters to equate it with the Gospel of Jesus and the New Testament, but to the psalmist in today's reading it is 'good news' in that it brings 'happiness' (v 35) and the hope of 'new life' (v 40). Elsewhere the psalmist makes clear that it helps the faithful draw near to God (v 3) and has a connection with God's salvation (v 154, 170).

One advantage of studying the Biblical languages is the opportunity to draw nearer to the mind and culture – and in the case of Psalm 119, the structure – of the writers. Each of the twenty-two stanzas of this Psalm begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet (and every line of the stanza begins with that letter). When I attempted a translation of the Psalm I omitted from the English version J, Q, X and Z. So, for today's reading, the fifth stanza of Psalm 119, I began each line with the letter E. So, the reading – which I'll use responsively at the Quambatook Co-operating (Anglican and Uniting) Church – will be translated as:

- 33 Educate me, LORD, in the meaning of your laws, and I will always observe them.
- 34 Explain your law to me, and I will keep it with all my heart.
- 35 Ever keep me obedient to your commands, because I delight in them.
- 36 Enable me to long for your laws rather than to become rich.
- 37 Eyes that are drawn to what is worthless will, with your help, give attention to your ways.

38 Extend your promise to me, your servant – the promise you make to those who obey you.

39 Extricate me from the disgrace I dread; how marvellous are your merciful judgements.

40 Every day I long for your instruction; let me live in your righteousness.

In relating our Psalm to today's Gospel theme of 'Kingdom lifestyle', we can see a parallel between the Psalm and the part of the Sermon on the Mount which constitutes today's Gospel reading. We'll not linger longer on our Psalm, but employ it as a backdrop to our main theme of 'Kingdom lifestyle'.

Kingdom lifestyle (Matthew 5:38-48)

Today's Gospel reading is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, which forms chapters 5 -7 of Matthew in most English Bibles (the 1995 NASB omits chapter and verse divisions). Commentators have a variety of approaches to these chapters. Most agree that it is a collection of Jesus' sayings – or, if you like, a compendium of Jesus' sermons - rather than a single sermon. But while there may be agreement that Jesus is teaching the ethics of God's kingdom, some see this extended passage as meant to show us the impossibility of our truly and fully keeping God's law while others see that as a cop-out, suggesting Jesus would not have taught this if he did not mean us to keep it. Perhaps there is some middle ground in understanding the Sermon on the Mount as representing a Kingdom lifestyle – how we are expected to live as Christians here and now, while acknowledging we often fail (perhaps at a deeper level, always fail) and need to seek God's forgiveness in Christ!

Our Gospel begins with Jesus teaching about revenge. He probes beneath the *lex talionis* of the Hebrew Scriptures, the law that permitted 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth' (v38). An early mentor of mine interpreted this as limitation of revenge rather than a right of punishment.

Regardless, Jesus goes further, spelling out the Kingdom lifestyle as not allowing for revenge at all. The examples that follow – 'turning the other cheek' (v39), giving your coat (v40) and carrying the bullying occupation soldier's pack an extra kilometre (v41) – seem intended as hyperbole or metaphor, reinforcing the argument rather than to be taken literally. So, too, with giving to the one who asks and lending to the person who wants to borrow.

The next passage is even more challenging. Jesus teaches his followers to 'love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (v44), thereby imitating the heavenly Father who gives sunshine and rain to the bad and good alike (v45). Where would be the incentive for God to reward you if you do what even society's outcasts and non-Jews do, love only those who love them and speak only to their friends? (v46, 47) In case we've not got the message, we are told that we 'must be perfect – just as [our] Father in heaven is perfect'. Are we to be 'perfect'? Can we be perfect? What does Jesus mean by perfect? These are some of the questions with which we are confronted by such a verse. Is Jesus complimenting those of us inclined to be perfectionists? Clearly not! Was not that the sin of the Pharisees? I remember a friend passing on GK Chesterton's advice to perfectionists: 'If a thing's worth doing, it's worth doing badly!'

All of which brings us back to the question of how we should approach the Sermon on the Mount.

I'm suggesting we seek to live by it, while recognising we cannot truly and fully do so, and must therefore also live in a state of repentance and asking forgiveness. This is the Kingdom lifestyle! In the Sermon on the Mount, it seems to me, Jesus probes beneath the outward understanding of God's law and reveals its dynamic nature. Paul depicted the law as a schoolmaster showing how far short we fall of God's standard and leading us to Christ that we might find forgiveness and justification in him. Luther had a wonderful saying that encapsulates what I'm trying to communicate. He suggested we are 'always sinners, always repentant (sorry for our sin), always righteous before God'. The last is true because we are justified in Christ – I am justified: 'just-as-if-I'd' never sinned!

**God whose love knows no limits and whose embrace extends to all,
stir within us a deepening thirst for the righteousness that Jesus taught and embodied,
a way of being in right relationship that first respects and honours
before anything is expected in return. Amen.**

Photo Reflection



Steps. Photo: Ann Miller

Further opportunities for Spiritual Nurture

1. Lady Day Quiet Day

Saturday March 25th

at St Thomas' Bunyip

A Lady Day Quiet Day from 10am till 2.30pm

The Rev'd Dean Spalding will talk about Luke's portrait and there will be input about Mary and devotion.

For more details and to RSVP please contact Ken Parker negris2@bigpond.com

Support on the journey

The Anam Cara Community's ministry is to be a support to those who are on the inner journey into God. Each person's journey is different, and we recognise that there are some for whom the Christian tradition is difficult or not supportive. We're committed to finding ways to hear the needs of each Associate, and support them as we can.

Contacts:

- *Website:* www.anamcaragippsland.org
 - To subscribe to or unsubscribe from the mailing list contact Jane
 - *Soul carer (Community Leader):* Jane (0411 316 346 or jemacqueen@gmail.com)
 - *Secretary / Librarian:* Sue 03 5182 5542
 - *Treasurer:* Kate
 - *Postal mail:* Anam Cara Community c/o PO Box 928, Sale, VIC 3850
 - *Diocesan Director of Professional Standards (to make complaints or express concerns about our ministries):* Ms Cheryl Russell 0407 563 313, cherylr@gippsanglican.org.au
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Love and prayers

Jane Macqueen

On behalf of the Servant Leaders

APBA & NRSV portions, TiS hymns 'Reprinted with permission.

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