

Anam Cara Community



Waterholes: 23 December 2018



Sunset, Darwin. Photo, Ann

Miller

Welcome

Welcome to Waterholes, the Anam Cara Community newsletter for the week beginning 24th December 2018.

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.

Christmas wishes

This weekend we celebrate love as we come to Advent 4 and look toward our Christmas celebrations.

On behalf of the Servant Leaders I wish all our readers a holy and peace filled Christmas. May you each find space for some silence and reflection... to find God in the small things, in nature, in the world around us and in the spaces. Learning to hear God's word in the world around us takes time... may you give yourself time this Christmas season.

This will be the final Waterholes for 2018. Waterholes will be in recess during January.

Blessings,

Jane

New Years Eve - Labyrinth Walk for Peace



31 December 2018 - 4pm - 7pm

Ann and Iain Miller's place, Sale.

Come and walk - Come and create - Come and pray - Come and reflect.

Stand up for peace.

Come whatever your age, creed, race, gender, religion.

Come as you are - Part of the earth, part of the human family.

Come for a short while or the whole time.

Come for peace.

No experience of walking labyrinths is required – please come along and join in this spiritual, meditative walk.

For information and to register interest: Susanna Pain

0418637469 susanna.pain@gmail.com

RSVP essential

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 Richard, Leanne and Rachel and Nicholas.
- For all clergy and church leaders as they prepare and deliver the message of Christ's birth.
- For all who visit our churches this Christmas to feel welcome and to receive the mystery of divine love.
- For those grieving loved ones this Christmas time and those who will spend Christmas on their own.
- For those who are ill, for the dying and those who sit with them.
- For all agencies and volunteers who reach out with love and prepare Christmas lunches for many.
- Associates and friends who have asked for prayer: Norma, June, Fiona Barry, Chris Venning and Val Lawrence.
- For all programmes working to bring a change in culture and bring an end to violence against girls and women.
- For political leaders to form governments that are committed to justice, inclusion and compassion.

- For all who are suffering as a result of extraordinary weather events, fire, drought, typhoons, hurricanes, heatwaves.
- For our churches to be places of inclusion, welcome and reconciliation.
- For peacemakers in our world. For world leaders in their discussions and decision making.
- For all who suffer as a result of violence.
- For wise and compassionate counsel and some direction and hope for the future of refugees and asylum seekers across the globe.

Prayer of the day

Gracious God,
 you have visited your people and redeemed us in your Son:
 as we prepare to celebrate his birth,
 make our hearts leap for joy at the sound of your word,
 and move us by your Spirit to bless your wonderful works.
 We ask this through him whose coming is certain,
 whose Day draws near,
 your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Christmas morning

Give us, O God, such love and wonder
 that, with shepherds and pilgrims unknown,
 we may come to adore the holy Child, the promised King,
 and with our gifts worship him,
 our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,
 who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Reflection

Advent 4

The Rev'd Chris Venning

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

Micah 5.2-5a Luke 2.1-21

Christmas is usually a busy time for clergy. I have less commitments as a supply minister (locum) in retirement than when I was in placement (full time). I well remember my six years at St Columba's Uniting Church Sale, when there were a couple of dozen meetings and services in our three congregations and the wider community during Advent and Christmas. I enjoyed it, but it was tiring. This year I head north and west of my home in Bendigo for

services at Boort and Charlton on December 23, and at Wedderburn on Christmas Eve (to which the fourth congregation in the Nardoo Loddon Cluster, Powlett Plains, will be invited). The Boort congregation will include Churches of Christ members as well as Uniting, and the Charlton service will be attended by Anglican as well as Uniting, so the services will have a welcome ecumenical flavour. Because the December 23 & 24 services will be Christmas services, I have added to the Advent 4 Micah reading a Christmas Day reading from Luke's Gospel (in fact I've added an extra verse even here).

On Christmas Day I will have lunch and dinner with family, including at least four – and hopefully all six – of my grandchildren, aged from a few months to 21 years. Family, and especially grandchildren, have a way of grounding our faith and reminding us of the gift of Christmas. Before reflecting briefly on the two readings, and as a way of introducing them, I'd like to share something written for young children I am hoping to have illustrated and published.

GRANDPA'S CHRISTMAS LETTER

Dear children,

Don't forget to leave
your stockings out on Christmas Eve,
for when you're tucked up snug in bed
and sleepy thoughts are in your head
through the night comes Santa Claus,
bringing lots of lovely
toys.

On another Christmas night,
in stable bare by candle-light,
Mary's baby boy was born –
God's Christmas gift to everyone.

So, opening presents Christmas morn
think back to when Jesus was born
and give God thanks for everything,
including Christ our heavenly King!

Then say a prayer for girls and boys
with little love, or food or toys,
for you are loved and greatly blessed –
now try to sleep and get your
rest!
With all my love, this Christmas and
always,

Grandpa

Micah, one of the Twelve Minor Prophets (they were shorter not less important), was a contemporary of Isaiah, Amos and Hosea, living about 700 years before the birth of Jesus. Our brief reading (Micah 5.2-5a) has both prophetic and historical significance. Bethlehem was the town of David, and of Jesus' birth. In Matthew 2, because Bethlehem had been prophesied as the birthplace of the Messiah, it attracted the paranoia of Herod the Great, King of Judaea, and resulted in the killing of boys in the region less than two years old. Historians and scholars debate whether this event really happened, as they are inclined to do about so much. In any event, Micah foreshadows what Christians have come to believe was God's gift of his Son the Messiah, **God's Christmas gift**— not only to the Jews, but to all humanity!

The opening verses of our Gospel (Luke 2.1-21) pick up this theme, as Joseph and Mary journey from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem, hometown of Joseph's ancestor King David, to register as part of the census ordered by the Roman Emperor Augustus. We find ourselves in quite a tangle if we try to work out how this ancestry relates to Jesus. Was Mary also descended from David? Do we read the Gospels as depicting Jesus' birth as a virgin birth (the traditional understanding), as Matthew and Luke seem to suggest? What about the apparent contradictions of the genealogical tables in Matthew 1 and Luke 3? As in so much else in faith and life, I find myself without clear answers. For myself, there is relative comfort in living with mystery – indeed, the lack of simple answers and the presence of mystery do much to nurture a faith which cannot ignore the mind but which often has to be content with the reasons of the heart!

Not only was **God's Christmas gift of Jesus** received gladly by Mary and presumably Joseph, but also, in Luke's account, by angels - and shepherds, with whom they shared their 'good news ... which will bring great joy to all the people' (Luke 2.10, GNB). So **God's Christmas gift of Jesus**, predicted by prophets and anticipated by Mary and Elizabeth and Zechariah, was welcomed too by what might be termed the common people. The shepherds would not have been high born, wealthy or highly educated as presumably were the visitors from the East in Matthew's Gospel, so Luke's Gospel is making a strong statement about Jesus the Christ or Messiah being for all the people! I added verse 21 to our Gospel reading because of the significance of Jesus' name. In the parallel verse in Matthew the angel explains the name: 'he will save his people from their sins' (1.21). While we are told 'Jesus' was not an uncommon name in Judah and Israel, in this case 'Jesus', meaning 'the LORD saves' or 'the LORD is Saviour', has a very special significance.

I remember many years ago reading a story of a wealthy man of the East who had a very poor friend, to whom he left at his death an envelope holding a cheque or draft on his account for a vast sum of money. The poor friend, in his grief, put the envelope aside unopened. Eventually he remembered the envelope and opened it. Excitedly he ran to the

bank, only to discover the friend's account had now been closed and the money divided among the members of his family. As I recall, the story was part of a Christmas reflection meant to illustrate the riches we have in Christ that we sometimes fail to access because we do not exercise faith.

The gifts we exchange this Christmas should remind us of **THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS, *God's Christmas gift of Jesus the Christ!*** Let us receive God's gift with thanks and praise, and give to family, friends and the needy with love and gratitude for all we have received!

Photo Reflection



Childhood wonder as the Christmas story comes alive once more. Photo, Jane

Further opportunities for Spiritual Nurture

1. The Abbey of St Barnabas, Raymond Island

For further information contact The Abbey

Phone (03)5156 6580 Email: info@theabbey.org.au www.theabbey.org.au

2. St Paul's Cathedral, Sale.

- Christian Meditation

-[7.45am - 8.15am](#) every [Wednesday](#) AND

- [5.30 - 6.00 pm](#) every [Thursday](#)

Christian Meditation is a spiritual wisdom and a practice leading from the mind to the heart. It is a way of simplicity, silence, stillness and openness to God. It can be practised by anyone, wherever you are on your life's journey. It is only necessary to begin – and to keep on beginning. Contact: Susanna Pain susanna.pain@gmail.com

This practice is in the tradition of the World Community for Christian Meditation <http://www.wccm.org/>

- Evening Prayer with focus on intercession 5.15pm Mondays

3. Meditation - the chapel of St James, Traralgon

A group of people who are exploring the inner journey regularly meet for prayer and meditation together. We meet twice a month on the 2nd and 4th Monday mornings [at 10 am](#). During the hour we spend together we share the reading of scripture, prayer and music. There is a long period of silent meditation. To sit in silence together before God helps us to recognise God in the complexities of our lives. In the depth of our being there is always a sanctuary filled with God's presence. We can go there in silence to be and to listen. All are welcome.

4. Bass Hill Hermitage

Thinking about making a silent Retreat?

Bass Hill Hermitage is on the Bass Coast, near Phillip Island. The Hermitage has its roots in the traditions of Christian Spirituality. It is a perfect place to reflect, pray and deepen your relationship with God. Beginners, as well as experienced retreatants are welcome.

They offer **directed and self-guided retreats as well as on-going Spiritual Direction and Supervision.**

The Hermitage can also be booked for a 'Quiet break' or some 'Time Out'. Visit the informative website:

www.basshillhermitage.com.au for more information.

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](tel:0411316346) or jemacqueen@gmail.com)
 - *Secretary / Librarian:* Sue [03 5182 5542](tel:0351825542)
 - *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](tel:0407563313), cherylrussell1@bigpond.com
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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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