

Anam Cara Community



Waterholes: 16 March 2019



Photo, Ross

Byrne

Welcome

Welcome to Waterholes, the Anam Cara Community newsletter for the week beginning 17th March 2019.

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.

Responding in prayer and silence to the New attacks in Zealand.

It was good to gather yesterday for the first Anam Cara Community Quiet Day for 2019. As we began the day we acknowledged our sorrow in response to the attacks in New Zealand. Bishop Richard shared the following words and led us in a minutes silence. Throughout the day prayer candles burnt continually as we held the people of New Zealand in our prayers.

We have all been shocked by the two brutal attacks on mosques in Christchurch.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of these horrific acts, and with their families.

We grieve with our trans-Tasman neighbours at the loss of innocent life, and the associated terror and trauma in a country that celebrates diversity and exemplifies a culture of inclusion and respect for all people.

Our hearts go out to our brothers and sisters in the great Abrahamic tradition of Islam, with whom we stand in solidarity as people of faith, of peace and of good will.

Please pray for those who seek to bring relief to the injured, comfort to the bereaved and order to the chaos of this terrible event and its aftermath.

Let us continue to work in our communities, our churches, our schools to enhance religious literacy and to disarm the fear of difference and the 'othering' that can manifest in such violence.



+ *Richard*

Ruminating with Ruth

Bishop Richard led two thought provoking reflections on the book of Ruth and in the silent spaces of the day people walked, reflected and prayed. We each found new insights and new questions to ponder.

A few of the questions that Bishop Richard gave us to ruminate on were:

- *what is your sense of how God is at work in the world, and in your life?*
- *what sustains you in those times when God seems to have forgotten about you, or God's face is hidden from you?*
- *who are the 'Moabites' of our own context - those we tend to see as 'other' - and where do they struggle for inclusion in our traditions and systems?*
- *what does it mean for us to 'work out our own salvation'? (Phil 2.12)*
- *what do you need to say to God today?*
- *what might Gods-word-written, in the story of Ruth , be saying to you today?*

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 in his leadership and ministry throughout the diocese. Leanne, Rachel and Nicholas.
- The Registry staff, Brian, Annette, Sue, Jill, David, Tim and Richard Connelly in their daily work and as they prepare for the move to Chapter House.
- The people of New Zealand - the injured and the bereaved. Muslim communities in New Zealand and around the world in their grief.
- For leaders of churches and nations and for each of us in our daily lives to have conversations that disarm the fear of difference.
- For those who are ill, for the dying and those who sit with them.
- Associates and friends who have asked for prayer: Norma, June, Fiona Barry, Pat Symonds, 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.
- Carmel and Zena as they prepare to sell Bass Hill Hermitage. For wisdom and peace amidst the sadness of this decision and for their ongoing ministry as they await the sale of the property.
- 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

God of our ancestors,
 whose chosen servant Abraham
 was given faith to obey your call
 and go out into the unknown:
 endow your Church with such faith
 that we may follow you with courage;
 for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
 one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Reflection

The Rev'd Heather Toms

..Genesis 15.1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3.17-4.1; Luke 13.1-9

Immediately prior to our Gospel lesson, Jesus warned that he came not to bring peace, but division {12:49-53}. He also warned the crowds that, while they knew how to read the sky for signs of impending weather, they did not know how to 'interpret this time' {12:54-56} by which he meant that their spiritual insights failed to match their understanding of ordinary physical phenomena.

Immediately after our Gospel lesson, a synagogue leader will criticize Jesus for healing on the Sabbath and Jesus will put him to shame {13:10-17}. At the end of chapter 13, Jesus will lament the recalcitrance of Jerusalem, 'that kills the prophets, and stones those who are sent to her!' {13:34}.

We have two stories and a parable within this Gospel text. Luke gives us a pair of stories that call us to repentance {vv. 1-5} and a parable that illustrates the patience and love of God {vv. 6-9}. 'This placing of contrasting ideas back to back is typically Lukan, the contrasting units forming the paradox of the Gospel. Luke does not destroy severity by infusing grace, nor does he destroy grace by infusing severity'.

Both stories {vv. 1-5} call for repentance, and 'the fig-tree parable identifies Jesus' hearers as being in the last season of opportunity to change their ways'.

My background came from a different faith tradition where there was not the use of the Australian Lectionary and I wondered why given discussions with friends from the Anglican tradition. My pastor at that time always believed that his ministry was to listen to the movement of the Holy Spirit and select scripture readings that were relevant to what was happening in the life of the congregation. I discussed with him that this method may appear to be unhealthy and full with pitfalls. My understanding was that the pastor could end up confusing personal preference with the movement of the Holy Spirit, and could push their own agenda too far, or could end up avoiding hard texts out of fear and there were often wide gaps within the readings and often we missed the difficult ones. Instead, I believed, following the lectionary ensured the pastor would be truly open to the Spirit, totally giving up control over what text is offered on any given day, trusting that the Lord will provide the message.

Well this week, I looked at the gospel lesson and said 'Oh No', this is too difficult, oh my goodness, what shall I do, sighed and wondered how this was going to come together. To preach about a tree not bearing fruit and how within my prison ministry I see many men come in dry, withered, despondent, parched, lacking nourishment, feeling hopeless, lifeless. I sense a slight tinge of the time and love that is required as they seek nourishment. How much time? Is this a time to challenge the men in green to use this time productively, however long, to repent for the conversion of their hearts, to change and to produce fruit? Good fruit! To cultivate the life of the Spirit within each one, to produce a life full of truth and love. The men in green do not need to be tormented and filled with guilt, but nourished and to have time to admit their part and their responsibility and their need for forgiveness. In the larger scheme of things, God's grace is greater than God's judgment. How could it be otherwise? Divine patience is simply another expression of God's love and grace. But God's grace is not to be understood as casual indulgence or indifference.

I thought and meditated on this word repentance and it appears to become less interesting when people mistake it to mean moral uprightness, expressions of regret, or a '180-degree turnaround.' Rather, here and many other places in the Bible, it refers to a changed mind, to a new way of seeing things, to being persuaded to adopt a different

perspective. It means similar things in other contexts from the wider Greek literary world. For all of us that is seeing things in a different perspective in a new way. This takes time, persistence, love, patience, humility, compassion and the grace of God.

In our Gospel lesson today, people came to Jesus with a really terrible story. They told of people from Galilee who had come to Jerusalem to make their sacrifices at the Temple. While they were there, Pilate's soldiers had attacked and killed them and had mixed their blood with the blood of sacrifices. Violent murder would be shocking enough, but the circumstances of these murders made them even more shocking. The soldiers carried out these murders in the Temple.

So Jesus did help them. First, he dealt with the unspoken question that was foremost in their minds. What did these Galileans do to deserve such a fate? Had they committed some terrible sin? Was this God's punishment? Jesus' answer was short and sweet. No! These Galileans were no worse than anyone else! They had not done anything terrible! This was not their punishment for some grievous sin! God was not behind these murders. Perhaps the people who had been killed had offended Pilate. Perhaps they were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. But they had not offended God. This was not God's doing!

Their question, whether stated or not, was, 'Were these people being punished for some sort of terrible sin?' Jesus said, 'No!' These people were not being punished for their sins, but now we get to the whole point of this text. However, Jesus said, 'but, unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did' {v. 5}.

To be very honest, that makes my head turn slightly. Jesus was saying, No! There was not anything wrong with the Galileans! God was not punishing them! But there is something wrong with you! Unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.

Then Jesus mentioned eighteen people who were killed when the Tower of Siloam collapsed. Had they done something terrible? No! Was God punishing them? No! They were just standing in the wrong place at the wrong time! If they had been on the other side of the tower, they would have lived, they would have been among those digging through the rubble for survivors. But they were not standing on the other side. They were standing exactly on the spot where that tower wanted to fall, and fall it did. It fell on them and killed them. Someone else had to dig them out. Eighteen people! Terrible! They were good people! It was a tragedy! They had done nothing to deserve it.

What seems to have happened here was that Jesus was looking for an opportunity to preach a sermon, and the story of the Galileans gave him an opening. This was an opportunity for Jesus to deliver a strong warning to the people of Jerusalem.

Jesus had good reason to do so! The people of Jerusalem were headed in the wrong direction. They were headed for disaster. Jesus wanted to warn them. He was not trying to scare them. He was not trying to condemn them, he was trying to save them. There was hope, but they had to act. They had to repent. They had to turn around and go in the other direction.

So Jesus gave them a parable. A land owner planted a fig tree and left it in the care of his gardener. After three years, he checked the tree and found that it was not bearing fruit. The land owner told the gardener to cut it down. The gardener did not want to cut it down. The gardener had worked hard with that tree for three years, and he was not ready to give up. The gardener had watered it and fertilized it and pruned it and maybe even prayed for it.

When Jesus told this parable about the fig tree, these Jerusalemites knew he was talking about them. They were unproductive! They were not living Godly lives. They were on the verge of disaster. They needed to change! They needed to repent!

These might seem like strange stories to us, but they tell us a couple of things:

First of all, these stories tell us that tragedy is not punishment for sin. Bad things happen! Bad things happen to people who make unwise decisions, but they also happen to good people. Saints die just like sinners! Saints get cancer too! Perhaps a drunk driver deserves an accident, but what about the people in the other car! They suffer too! Was it because they did something wrong! No! Was it because their loved ones did something wrong! No! They just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. It happens!

That is not wonderful news, but it is the truth! And there is a sense in which it is good news. When something terrible happens, we do not have to feel guilty. We do not have to feel that God is punishing us for some terrible sin. We do not have to feel that God has turned against us. We do not have to feel that God will hound us for the rest of our lives. Bad things happen. They are terrible. But there is still potential for living in the presence of God.

But the second thing is just the opposite. It is a hard thing to hold two opposing ideas in our minds at one time, but sometimes we need to do so. The first idea is that bad things happen to good people, to people who do not deserve them. The second idea is that bad things also happen to people who perhaps deserve them, who make unwise decisions. A drunk driver has an accident. An employee is fired for shoplifting. An abusive husband goes to jail. Sometimes our sins find us out. Sometimes our wild oats bear fruit. Sometimes we receive what we deserve.

So Jesus calls us to repent! Repentance is not just feeling bad. Repentance is making a

change. Repentance is turning around and going in the other direction. Repentance moves us away from the precipice. It steers us toward new life. That is why Jesus calls us to repentance. It is an act of love. It is an act of hope. Jesus would not call us to repent if repentance would not help. Jesus calls us to repent, and repentance will help.

Now given that we do not get to choose what scripture fits our needs at a particular time, we look for the ways that a text speaks to us despite our personal preferences. The good news is that some of our initial reactions to this text are rooted in a misunderstanding of the allegory Jesus gives us. Many of us may believe that the landowner is God and the gardener is Jesus. But nowhere in Luke's gospel is God portrayed as an angry, vindictive God that needs to be placated or negotiated with. Instead, God is the one who waits every day for the prodigal son to come home. God is the woman who leaves no pillow unturned looking for her lost coin. Luke's depiction is of a God who rejoices over one who repents than over the remaining ninety-nine who need no repentance.

Instead, as one scholar David Lose suggests, 'Given Luke's consistent picture of God's reaction to sin, then perhaps the landowner is representative of our own sense of how the world should work. That is, from very early on in life, we want things to be 'fair' and we define 'fair' as receiving rewards for doing good and punishment for doing evil. {Except of course, when it comes to our own mistakes and misdeeds, then we want mercy!} But our God is a God of justice, not fairness. A lovely cartoon that I came across recently reminds me of these two words.

The cartoon has three people trying to see over a fence. One is short, one is medium-height, and one is tall. All three are given two boxes to stand on. Of course, the tall person can easily see over the fence. The medium-height person can just barely see over, but the short person cannot see, even with the two boxes. This frame is called fairness or equality. But the next frame is called justice. In this frame, the short-statured person gets three boxes, the medium-height person gets two boxes, and the tallest person gets just one box. All three people can now see over the fence equally. Of course no fence means freedom new life - liberation.

I share this story because I do not think our God is an angry landowner demanding results and expecting everyone to figure things out themselves, to produce fruit without adequate help. No, I think the gardener is actually God, our advocate looking for justice, not just fairness. Perhaps God is the one raising a contrary voice to suggest that the ultimate answer to sin is not punishment, not even in the name of justice, but rather mercy, reconciliation, and new life. So, in the threat of danger and even death, God is a God who intercedes, who demands mercy, and in fact, is willing to get down in the manure to make sure we thrive and bear that delicious, life-giving fruit.

Now, even the gardener is not naïve to think that our window for productivity is

unlimited. Even the gardener submits to the owner that if after a year, the tree does not produce; the owner may cut the tree down. But I do not think God will let that happen. God is 'all in' with making sure we are redeemed, whether by getting dirty with us to help us grow, or by interceding again, even when the produce is just not there. Not unlike Abraham pleading for Sodom and who argued and argued with God to spare ten, twenty, even fifty people, our gardener is one of mercy, reconciliation, and redemption.

So as I struggled with the readings, and procrastinated, God found a way to speak despite my desperation and uneasiness. The fear of sending the wrong message about our walk with Jesus Christ, God speaks of mercy, reconciliation and redemption. 'The task of the disciple is to witness and then wait, to take our best step forward and leave the rest to God. We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. Being freed from managing the results of our actions enables us to do something, and do it well. We may never see the end results, but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.

We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.' I do not know about you, but I am eternally grateful that our God is one who is willing to fight to the last pile of manure to encourage and strengthen us. If our God can do that, we are bound to rise again in hopeful new life.

When Jesus calls us to repent, that is what he calls us to do. We cannot undo the past, but we can do what is right now:

We can apologize.

We can ask forgiveness.

We can do what we can to make amends.

We can resolve to walk rightly in the future.

We can pray for God's help.

We can lay down our burden.

We can become free.

That is the message of our Gospel lesson. Jesus calls us to repent. Jesus calls us to lay down our burden of guilt. Jesus seeks to forgive us. Jesus seeks to set us free. Jesus seeks to make us whole. That is grace – God's amazing grace. **Amen.**

Photo Reflection



Photo, Ross

Byrne

Further opportunities for Spiritual Nurture

1. Anam Cara Community Dates for 2019

[1st June](#) - Quiet Day - St Paul's Cathedral;

[14th September](#) - Quiet Day - St Mary's Morwell;

23rd November- Thanksgiving Service at the Cathedral

2. The Abbey of St Barnabas, Raymond Island

Easter Pilgrimage 2019

In the company of God's creation

Share the journey of Easter in a sacred place, a place that speaks of the wonder of God and God's creation: a vulnerable, fragile environment that holds in its embrace those who spend time on its shores. The Abbey - 2 hectares of open bushland, surrounded on three sides by remnant bushland and the shores of the Gippsland Lakes, is a place for reflection, contemplation and walking.

[Thursday 18 April - Monday 22 April 2019](#)

Four nights at The Abbey in well appointed motel style rooms

Maundy [Thursday evening](#) till mid [morning Monday](#)

Cost per person twin share \$262 - includes accommodation and breakfast

Cost per person single \$407 - includes accommodation and breakfast

RSVP: [Monday 8th April 2019](#)

Liturgies, some held at St Peter's by the Lake Paynesville

Others at The Abbey include Maundy [Thursday](#) Eucharist and Foot Washing

Good [Friday Morning](#) Service and afternoon Stations of the Cross

Easter Light Service on Easter Eve and Eucharist on Easter Day

Share with people from the Paynesville congregation and Bishop Richard and his family [on Saturday night](#) and [Sunday morning](#).

For further information contact The Abbey

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

3. St Paul's Cathedral, Sale.

Stations of the Cross Exhibition at St Paul's Cathedral.

Opening by Bishop Richard at 2pm on 31st March.

This exhibition will be open until Easter with local artists having created pieces in various mediums to form the Stations of the Cross. An opportunity for contemplation.

- there will be **Contemplative Quiet Afternoon with the Stations exhibition on Wednesday 3rd April from 2pm - 4 pm.**

Men's Retreat - Listening to the call

Leader: Nikolai Blaskow

When: April 13th

Where: St Paul's Cathedral, Sale

Theme: The practice of living with purpose

Reflection: Why when God's world is so big did you fall asleep in a prison of all places?

RSVP and for more information: 0428 167 724

Donation: \$20.00 or donation

- 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

4. 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.

5. Bass Hill Hermitage

Thinking about making a silent Retreat?

Carmel and Zena are still taking bookings for retreats at the Hermitage but can only confirm and take deposits 30 days in advance in case of a short settlement.

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
-

Love and prayers

Jane Macqueen

On behalf of the Servant Leaders

*APBA & NRSV portions, TiS hymns 'Reprinted with permission.
Copyright Broughton Publishing Pty Ltd.'*

*Copyright © 2019 Anam Cara Community Gippsland, All
rights reserved.*