



Alstonville Anglicans

Advent 3

Sunday 11th December 2022

Welcome



Image: freebibleimages/photos/John the Baptist

Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people, traditional custodians of the Land.

Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.

Streaming licence: CCLI 102220

Alstonville Anglicans are committed to ensuring that all people who participate in our worship, programs and ministries have a safe and rewarding experience.

Tel: 66280231 www.anglicans.live

Bank account: BSB 705 077 / Acc:00032931

Dates 11th December to 18th December

11 th Dec	Sunday
9am	Holy Communion
12 th Dec	Monday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am-3pm	Op Shop
13 th Dec	Tuesday
	Parish Office Closed (No office access)
7.30am	Women's Birthday breakfast
7.30am	(Options)
	Men's Birthday breakfast
4pm	(The Crossing) Singalong group
14 th Dec	Wednesday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am	Anam Cara
9am-3pm	Op Shop
15 th Dec	Thursday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am-3pm	Op Shop
6pm	Anam Cara
16 th Dec	Friday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
10am	Holy Communion
18 th Dec	Sunday
9am	Holy Communion
7pm	Blue Christmas

This bulletin contains current announcements and the week's calendar and the sermon notes from the previous Sunday. Use our welcome booklet for info and contact details for regular activities. Keep it as a reference tool. We welcome any feedback on the booklet...
[.../.../welcomeBooklet_v3.pdf](#)

Commmuity Engagement

To make you smile!



My wife asked me to put ketchup on the shopping list.

Now I can't read anything!



Lost Sheep Trail

A Christmas scavenger hunt that is free and fun for everyone!

Our shepherds heard the good news about God's gift to the world! They want to go see the baby Jesus with the other shepherds but can't find their sheep. All our shepherds know is that the sheep are in these shops in downtown Alstonville. Will you help them find their missing sheep?



Download a form
anglicans.live



SEW HELPFUL CRAFT GROUP.

Our last normal meeting for the year will be on Monday 5th December at our usual 1pm in the ministry centre.

The following Monday we will meet at 2pm in the ministry centre to tidy up any unfinished business and then go to Lorraine Beattie's for afternoon tea. Please bring a plate.

Our first meeting next year will be on February 6th.

We meet regularly on the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month between 1pm and 3:30. New members are very welcome; bring your own craft, join a group activity or just come for a chat.

Lorna Simpson (ph 6628 3865), Margaret Brown (6628 3206 / 0407 283 206)

Worship and Spirituality



From our family to yours
COME AS ...YOU*

24 Dec 5PM FAMILY SERVICE
24 Dec 11PM CAROLS & Communion
25 Dec 9AM CHRISTMAS SERVICE

Alstonville Anglicans

anglicans.live



The Reverend Cathy Ridd will be commissioned as the Priest in Charge of the Anglican Parish of Ballina on Sunday 11th December 2022 at 6pm. Reverend Cathy and members of the Anglican Parish of Ballina cordially invite you to this special occasion.

The service will be at St Mary's Anglican Church, Corner of Norton and Burnet St Ballina. Supper will be served following the service. We hope you will be able to join with us in celebrating this new ministry.



Messy Church Planning Meeting

Wednesday 14th December
4.00pm
In the Ministry Centre

The holiday season is hard for those whose hearts are hurting.
You are not alone.



Blue Christmas

is a gentle, contemplative service for
those who are carrying pain or loss
during this season of celebration.

Sunday 18th December 7pm

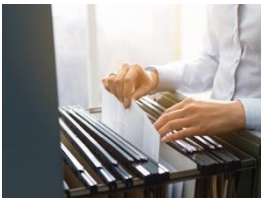
Alstonville Anglicans
6 The Avenue Alstonville
anglicans.live

Empowering Leadership

Worship space:

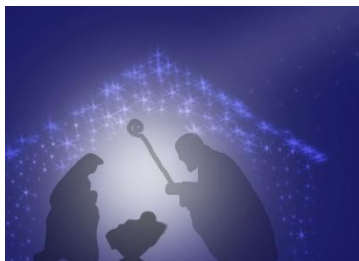
As you know Parish Council is experimenting with the use of chairs in the worship space. A decision will be made at the Parish Council meeting on 7 December 6pm. Please provide feedback on your views to any parish councillor before then.

AGM 2023:



The AGM is set for Sunday 19 February 2023 at 10.30am in the church. If you would like to submit a report for the AGM papers please do so before 15 January 2023. Reports are submitted to office@anglicans.live

“Preparing the Way for the Lord” Isaiah 11:1-10 and Matthew 3:1-12



The Season of Advent is all about preparation and getting ourselves ready for the birth of Jesus. As I pondered on this preparation and time of getting ready, I wondered how our communities, how you prepare and get ready.

Do you decorate your homes with Christmas decorations?
Do you send Christmas Cards, write letters, emails, prepare a Facebook post?
Do you buy gifts and give gifts?
Do you attend Christmas parties?
Do you host the Christmas Day Lunch or Dinner for family, friends or may be even complete strangers?
Do you in all your Christmas preparations talk about Jesus and share His life story and ministry with others?

Here at Alstonville Anglicans, St Bartholomew’s Church has been prepared as well. We have the Advent wreath with the five candles. The three purple and pink one represent the hope, peace, joy, and love that we anticipate should be in the world. While the white candle is the Christ candle. Each week leading up to Christmas, one by one the purple candles are lit and then on Christmas the Christ candle is lit symbolising Jesus has come into the world. To add further illustration, we also have the nativity scene that illustrates the story of Christmas.

The word “Advent” refers to the coming or arrival of someone or something. It is traditionally and liturgically connected to Christmas. Christmas is about an arrival - the most significant

arrival in history. It is about the Advent - the coming of Jesus Christ.¹

I wonder though in the busyness of life, the hustle and bustle that exists, when we are attempting to finalise our years' labour; preparing for holidays, putting up decorations, the buying of gifts and going to the many Christmas parties we attend, do we pause and consider the most important preparation - are we spiritually prepared?

The first thing I want to say about the bible readings this morning is that they both point to Jesus. They both in their individual styles seek to build the kingdom of heaven. The readings give us the tools, the encouragement we need to ensure that the kingdom of heaven becomes a reality when we exist in a fallen world. The readings show us that the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love can exist in our lives as we prepare for the Way of the Lord.

Isaiah 11 begins with the claim that new life will spring forth from an injured stump. "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots."² The following verses then give us an expression of the new future where we see a ruler on whom the spirit will rest. Promise comes to Israel in the form of a person - a human king who embodies the best of Israel's traditions: This ruler is wise and understanding, powerful and effective in war, able to judge for the benefit of the poor and obedient to God. This king rules the world in such a way that the poor are treated righteously, the meek are given a fair hearing and the wicked are killed.



So glorious is this reign that he is literally clothed in righteousness and faithfulness. We also see in these verses the reordering of creation's priorities. Life emerges from death. This is the way of Israel's God. The King spoken of here does not come to hurt, but rather

¹ Back to the Bible – 14 Days Christmas Devotional – Day 1 <http://daleosheilds.com>

² Isaiah 11:1

remakes lives, transforms lives, allowing peace to emanate outward, filling the world with the knowledge of the Lord. The people will be drawn to God who resides at Zion.³



Today in our Gospel reading we are introduced to an interesting character in that of John the Baptist. The opening verse of chapter 3 indicates to us that John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea. John the Baptist’s preaching was about repentance because the kingdom of heaven has come near. Repentance is not merely a change of mind but a radical change of one’s life that especially involves forsaking sin and turning or returning to God.⁴ Not a change of mind but rather a radical change of one’s life. God had called John the Baptist to be His messenger, to be the forerunner to go ahead and prepare the people. John the Baptist was calling people if they truly want to be a people of God, they needed to first confess their sins and seek God’s forgiveness. Thus, he offers them a baptism of repentance so that they can be forgiven.

Now there is a saying, “First impressions count”. Much of our remaining verses describes John the Baptist. Our imagination is stretched as his appearance and living habits are described. He is described as wilderness man. He is clothed in camel’s hair, wearing a leather belt and eats locusts and wild honey.⁵ Not the most appealing type of character, is he?

But, despite his appearance, we see the people from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole the region of the Jordan are drawn to him, they come. They come confessing

³ <https://www.workingpreacher.org> Commentary on Isaiah 11:1-10 – Working Preacher from Luther Seminary by Michael J. Chan

⁴ The Holy Bible, *New International Version* Zondervan NIV Study Bible 1984 p. 1470 - Matthew 3:2 (Study foot note)

⁵ Matthew 3:4

their sins and they were baptised by him in the Jordan River. At this point we are introduced to the Pharisees and the Sadducees who have also come to be baptised. The Pharisees were a legalistic group choosing to keep the law of Moses. Whereas a Sadducees were more worldly and politically minded in their approach. They did not believe in the resurrection.⁶ John the Baptist called them out for their beliefs and behaviour calling them a brood of vipers. He would not baptise the Pharisees and Sadducees because they failed to give evidence of repentance. John the Baptist tells them to produce fruit consistent with repentance. Well, what does that mean? It means to demonstrate the true change in your heart and mind by the way that you live your life. The arrival of the Messiah will bring repentance.

John the Baptist is humble and as such not drawing attention to himself, but rather wanting to point the way to one who is greater than he. While he is baptising and calling for repentance and forgiveness of sins, he is pointing people to Jesus with the words "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire".⁷ This is the role John the Baptist plays out in a significant way, calling attention to the one who ushers in God's kingdom. Jesus is the Messiah whose ministry is empowered by God's Spirit.

The people of Jerusalem and all Judea were not drawn to John the Baptist for his physical appearance or what he ate, but rather by the words he was sharing. For us living in 2022, the world in which we live is far from ideal. We can be beacons of God's light in the world. People are drawn to us by our actions and words that we speak. By our attitudes and our acceptance of *all* people. Through the teachings of the Bible, we have been



⁶ The Holy Bible, *New International Version* Zondervan NIV Study Bible 1984 p. 1471 - Matthew 3:7 (Study foot note)

⁷ Matthew 3:11

taught to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength and to love your neighbour as yourself. Yes, we are encouraged to confess our short-comings and seek forgiveness. We too are called and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live out a life that was modelled by Jesus' example and to share the good news.

It is Jesus who brings us *hope* into our lives to look forward to.

It is Jesus who brings us *peace* of mind.

It is Jesus who brings us *joy* into our hearts.

It is Jesus who brings us *love* and is *love*.

May the hope, the peace, the joy, and the love fill your heart!

God has the power to build a great kingdom from a tiny shoot. Our Saviour had a humble beginning at a time when David's family was in dishonour; but in the end, His Kingdom will prevail over all earthly powers. He will bring peace on earth and the glory of God will cover the earth.⁸



Friends, my hope and prayer for this season of Advent as we move towards Christmas is that you will allow yourself time to prepare the way for the Lord in your life. I encourage you to set aside some time to take a spiritual inventory, to account for your shortcomings and return with a renewed passion for Jesus Christ. Be comforted that Jesus wants to transform your life. Get ready for the

good things God has planned for your future!⁹

Amen.

Mark Stuckey, LLM

¹ Wiersbe, W. (1991, p. 460) "With the Word" Oliver-Nelson Books, a division of Thomas Nelson, Inc. Publishers. ¹ Back to the Bible – 14 Days Christmas Devotional – Day 2 <http://daleosheids.com>

Sentence of the Day

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God.' Isaiah 35.3-4

Collect

Sustain us, O God, with the power of your love
on our journey to meet the One who is coming:
strengthen our weak hands,
make firm our feeble knees,
and open blind eyes to the dawning of your kingdom,
so that our hearts may rejoice
as we behold the majesty of our God.
We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Matthew 11.2-11

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples

³ and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?'

⁴ Jesus answered them, 'Go and tell John what you hear and see:

⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them.

⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me.'

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind?

⁸ What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces.

⁹ What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written,
"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."

¹¹ Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.