



Alstonville Anglicans

Advent 4

Sunday 18th December 2022

Welcome



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 18th December to 25th December

18 th Dec	Sunday
9am	Holy Communion
7pm	Blue Christmas
19 th Dec	Monday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am-3pm	Op Shop
20 th Dec	Tuesday
	Parish Office Closed (No office access)
21 st Dec	Wednesday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am	Anam Cara
9am-3pm	Op Shop
22 nd Dec	Thursday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
9am-3pm	Op Shop
6pm	Anam Cara
23 rd Dec	Friday
9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
10am	Holy Communion
24 th Dec	Saturday
5pm	Family Christmas
11pm	Carols and Communion
25 th Dec	Sunday
9am	Christmas Service

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](#)




Community Engagement

To make you smile!



Why did no one bid for Rudolph & Blitzen on ebay?

Because they were two deer!



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



Sing-a-long Group

In recess until 31st
January 2023

Alstonville
Anglicans
6 The Avenue
Alstonville
anglicans.live

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

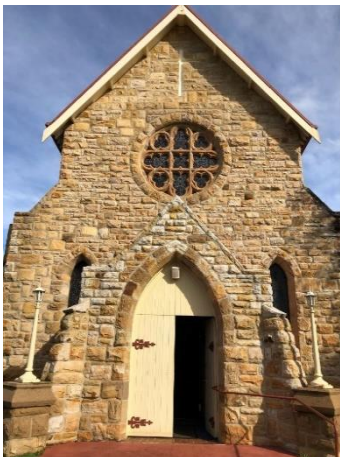
The holiday season is hard for those whose hearts are hurting.
You are not alone.

Blue Christmas

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

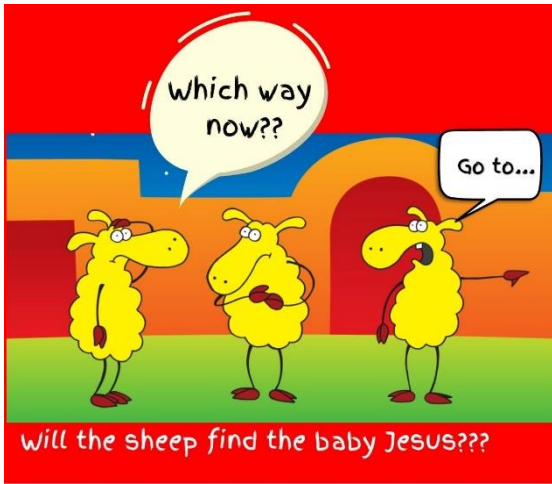
Sunday 18th December 7pm

Alstonville Anglicans
6 The Avenue Alstonville
anglicans.live



There will be no Friday Service on 30th December 2022.

Friday Services will continue normally through January 2023.



Lost Sheep Family Christmas Service

Alstonville Anglicans
Saturday 24th Dec
5pm



6 The Avenue
Alstonville
anglicans.live

Empowering Leadership

Save the Date!

A.R.E.A. Movie Night

More details closer to
the date

A.R.E.A. is planning
another Film Night at
Ballina Cinemas

Sunday

12th February 2023

at 6pm



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

Christmas Closing Times

Parish Office:
12 noon 23rd December
reopening 23rd January 2023

Op Shop:
3pm 15th December
reopening 9th January 2023



Sermon Notes

Advent 3A 2022

Nelson Mandela



This time next year will mark the tenth anniversary of the death of Nelson Mandela. Born in an obscure Xhosa village he became the first black president of a democratic South Africa. Truth is stranger than fiction – who would have believed that a former terrorist jailed for life, would be released after 27 years to become a statesman recognised worldwide. Ten years after his death there is much hagiography on the life of Nelson Mandela, meaning that the stories surrounding his life paint him as a saint. Yet Desmond Tutu remembers an angry Mandela and has commented that his 27 years of imprisonment were a dark night, a crucible of

transformation so that the Mandela who emerged was gracious, forgiving of his captives and able to lead a more united country.

Imagine Nelson Mandela sitting in prison during the last of those 27 years. Some news, but not much, drips into the Robben Island prison. Would he be wondering what was going on in South Africa? Would he wonder how South Africa was changing? Would he be reflecting on his life, wondering if it was all worth it? Would he be considering the sacrifices he had made and wondering if these sacrifices had made any difference at all?

Mandela was a giant of the 20th century; so much so that in 2009 the United Nations declared 18 July Mandela day. At the time of his death much of Mandela's vision was realised, even though there is still much work to do.

I suggest that there are parallels between Nelson Mandela contemplating his life, fate and future in prison and John the Baptist, a revolutionary prophet imprisoned by the last king of the Jews, Herod.

John the Baptist



As you know, John, much like Nelson Mandela, challenged the oppression in political and religious leadership. Scholarship today confirms that John the Baptist was a member of the Essene community. The Essenes, who lived near Qumran around the Dead Sea, had an ascetic approach to life and repudiated

the decadence of the world they saw around them. Much of this Essene lifestyle is reflected in John the Baptist, who, like prophets Elijah and Elisha before him, lived in the desert wearing camel skin and eating locusts and honey when he could find them.

Enormously admired in his day, John gave voice to the people's anger at the elites who profited from religious and political hierarchies.



More than anything, John wanted God's kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. The dreams described in Isaiah's poetry inspired John, a land of safety with enough for all, a land where people's full flourishing was nurtured and where there were no blockages to people's needs being satisfied. John's dreams and vision for a kingdom where the hungry are fed and the those in debtors' prison are freed threaten the status quo, especially if the status quo relies on many being poor so that few can be rich. Life seldom goes smoothly for activist and constantly speaking out against Herod landed John in prison.

Imagine John sitting in prison during the last of his years. Some news, but not much, drips into John's prison. Would he be wondering what was going on? Would he wonder how society was changing? John heard news of Jesus, his cousin and former student and disciple, doing God's work, articulating God's kindness and love in care for the most vulnerable. Would John be reflecting on his life, wondering if it was all worth it? Would he be considering the sacrifices he had made and wondering if these sacrifices had made any difference at all? Was there any hope for a new world, for God's kingdom to come on earth?

Jesus gracious words to John comfort him with hope: new life the dead receive, the lame leap for joy, the mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe, the blind see. In other words, John's dreams of a new world order are coming true.

Us

Like Mandela and John we too may contemplate our lives from inside our prisons. Our prison bars are apathy, doubt, a lack of enthusiasm and commitment for God's kingdom, a lack of faith in our faith, discouragement, and the endless busyness of our lives. We desperately yearn for God's kingdom of peace, hope, justice, kindness, and gentleness. We take communion trusting in a universe where all have enough bread, and all have wine to celebrate. We pray. We worship. Our hearts long for all children to experience safety, love, and hope. Yet the world around us belies our deepest confidences. The political systems of injustice and racism effect the most vulnerable. Aboriginal people still have no voice, no justice, no acknowledgement of the history of pain embedded in their DNA. The war in Ukraine rages against our dreams of peace. We feel frustration like John and Mandela did, Jesus' revolution of love does not seem to be happened. What can break us free from our prisons of doubt, discouragement, and apathy? Two things:

Focus on the positive

1. Jesus says that God's kingdom is on the way and is unfolding in our midst. It is true that we live inside the tension of the yet and the not yet. There is a tug of war with God's kingdom and Isaiah's dream on the one hand and the reality of war, violence, and injustice on the other hand. Jesus asks that we notice and bless the moments where the kingdom of God blossoms. This is why Jesus messaged John with the Good News of the blind seeing, the lame walking and the imprisoned free. Jesus was drawing attention to the positive kingdom moments while John was focused on negative despair. It is human nature to give more credit to the negative and downplay the positive. Neuroscientists teach us that our brains are hotwired to remember the negative more than the positive. While one negative experience trains the brain, it requires five positive experiences to create a learning



moment. Negative memories stick like Velcro and positive memories stick like Teflon. Jesus helps us by reminding us to look at the positive moments. We are invited to look at the seeds of the kingdom of God growing, and not focus on the dark, dank soil, compost and manure surrounding the growing seed.

Live the future now

2. "Strengthen the weak hands," says the Prophet "And make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, 'Be strong, do not fear!'" The prophet Isaiah who inspired John the Baptist and Jesus paints a vivid picture of God's new world order. The vision of God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven is to inspire people to live God's promised future as if it is a reality now. Thus in God's promised future, there is no loneliness thus we celebrate belonging and community now. In God's promised future there is no hunger and poverty thus in the present we share our excess so that all have enough. In God's promised future people have access to education and all that might nourish their full potential thus in the present we support policies that remove blockages to people's agency and empowerment. To describe how blockages to human growth is removed Isaiah uses the image of a highway, a straight road where mountains are made low, and valleys are lifted up. "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."



Sentence of the Day

A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel: God with us. Matthew 1.23

Collect

Gracious God,
you chose the virgin Mary, by your grace,
to be the mother of our Lord and Saviour:
so fill us with your grace,
that with her we may rejoice in your salvation,
and in all things embrace your will;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Matthew 1.18-25

18 Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.

19 Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

20 But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

21 She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

22 All this took place to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

23 'Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,
and they shall name him Emmanuel', which means, 'God is with us.'

24 When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife,

25 but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

Values

What follows are the best words that we are able to offer, to describe what we love best about Alstonville Anglicans. When you come to us and when we go to you, this is what we are thinking and feeling.

Beloved:

each person comes into the world as an original blessing from God. Thus, each person is a beloved person: significant, wanted and loved.

Belonging:

anyone who wants to belong already belongs. We want to welcome each other as a gift, saying, "my greatest difference from you is my greatest gift to you". Community matters and is protected. We want to consciously enjoy each other hearing "the Christ in me sees the Christ in you."

Being:

we are human beings not human doings. Our being present is important. The Spirit of God vibrates within us "like a pure diamond, blazing with the invisible light of heaven."

Believing:

we are partners with God in living heaven on earth now. We want to be one call among many, offering a provocative but compassionate voice calling for a whole new way of thinking and believing that is loving, liberating and lifegiving.

Blessing:

as beloved original blessings, we are blessed to be a blessing to others. God is always on God's way through us to creation, of which humans are a part. We believe everyone is called, that everyone has something beautiful to do for God. We want to be the sort of beloved community that creates space for people to express their calling.