



Alstonville
Anglicans

Fifth Sunday in Lent

21 March 2021

**Welcome,
so good to see you.**



Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people,
Traditional custodians of the Land.
Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.
Streaming licence: One License

Thought for the week on John 12

“Goodbye”

When we read the Gospel of John it is helpful to remember that the book is essentially divided into two parts. The first 12 chapters focus on Christ’s ministry to the world. From chapter 13 to the end his focus is teaching and ministry to his disciples.

Our reading in John 12:13-22, Jesus is approaching the end of his ministry and the end of his life. We are given insight into his own experience of saying goodbye, of letting go and learning to die creatively. His pain and anguish are described in verse 28 where he speaks of his soul being troubled. Notice also how he makes an active decision to not bypass the pain of goodbye but to live through it. Life is about dying small deaths and dying big deaths. Small goodbyes or little deaths are situations where we experience a sense of loss or incompleteness. We experience these in our daily lives when we change jobs, when our children go to the school for the first time, when we move homes, or churches, when we grieve friendships that have died and when we move through the normal stages of life.

There are also big goodbyes and big deaths or surrenders. The death of a loved one, divorce and loss of independence are some of the big deaths that people face.

Our gospel reading teaches us that dying is essential for our growth. This is what Jesus meant when he explained to the people around him that a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to produce fruit. Jesus was trying to teach us that the nature of spiritual maturity is learning to die creatively. Therefore the image of the cross is offered. In learning to die creatively we bring life.

Liturgy for 21st March

Sentence of the Day

'This is the covenant I will make with them,' says the Lord God: 'I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.' Jeremiah 31.33

Collect

O God, our Redeemer,
in our weakness we have failed
to be your messengers of forgiveness and hope:
renew us by your Holy Spirit,
that we may follow your commands
and proclaim your reign of love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Readings

John 12:20–36

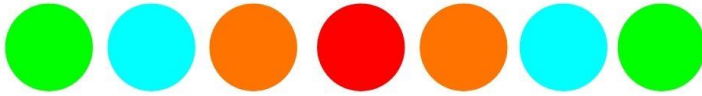
²⁰ Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²² Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³ Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵ Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the

Father will honour. ²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹ Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.



Messages

Worship and Spirituality portfolio



Alstonville

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sharing the Good Life

Join us for Easter

Here is your itinerary for your

personal,

authentic

and timeless

Easter Experience

with Alstonville Anglicans

from 1 April – 4 April

6-8 the Avenue Alstonville.

anglicans.live



The Easter Experience begins with

Maundy Thursday 6pm 1 April

We gather in the Ministry Centre at 6pm on 1 April for a meditative Eucharist. There are many symbols to guide our worship through Maundy Thursday

- including the commandment to love,
- love in action through the act of foot-washing,
- and the Institution of the Eucharist, a feast of bread and wine where we remember Jesus is in us and with us.



**Maundy Thursday
All-night Vigil
from 7pm Thursday 1 April
to 8am Friday 2 April**

The all-night vigil is in the **Church Sanctuary** and begins on the evening of Maundy Thursday 7pm and continues through the night until Friday morning 8am. The vigil is an act of **silent prayer** when we are symbolically with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, near the mount of Olives. Jesus said to his disciples “Watch and Pray.” So, we watch. And pray. In silence. With Jesus.

For some, swimming silence is easy. Others need some guidance – this is okay. The silence is supported by meditative music, a visual display and some cue cards to help you step into silent prayer.

All members of the community are invited to sign-up for an hour between 7pm Thursday 1 April and 8am Friday 2 April to be with Jesus in the silence of the night.

As a gift of prayer, participants are invited to bring a bunch of flowers or greenery from their own gardens and place it near the Altar as a symbol of self-offering before being in silence for their rostered hour. At the end of their hour each participant is invited to light a candle before leaving.

What to do?

- Sign up for an hour of silent meditation on Maundy Thursday. (Sign-up sheet is on the church door).

- Bring flowers or greenery from your own or a neighbourhood garden.
- On arriving at the Church, sign-in and sanitise.
- Place your greenery or flowers in the growing garden of Gethsemane near the altar.
- Enjoy the silence with others for an hour (or more).
- When you are ready to leave, light a candle in the baptismal font and depart in peace.

FAQ

Why do we observe the all-night vigil on Maundy Thursday?

In the Scriptures Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane before he died the next day. He asked for help saying to his disciples “Watch and pray with me.” We symbolically spend time with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane through silent prayer.

Where is the all-night vigil held?

In the church sanctuary, enter through the front door.

What do I wear?

Wear something warm if necessary. Come as ...you. Shoes optional. Slippers normal.

Can I come if I didn't sign up?

We need a minimum of two people for each hour, but we can have up to 40 people so feel free to come.

Am I allowed to talk?

This is a moment in your life where you are given freedom not to talk. Give yourself and others the freedom and gift of silence and notice what happens in you.

Can I bring my dog?

We have had a new carpet placed in the church and ideally, we prefer not to have pets shedding hair etc. However, we are aware that late at night people, especially those who live alone, may feel safer with their dog and this may help them come to church to enjoy the silence. If you feel it necessary to bring a dog for your personal safety, please take full responsibility for your pet not disturbing the silence of others. There is a carpet sweeper in the vestry for you to clean up any hair your four-legged child may have left behind.

Can I bring a friend or a partner?

The more the merrier, guide them in what is expected by offering them this information.

The all-night vigil ends with

Morning Prayer at 8am in the Church on Good Friday 2 April.





EASTER

**The Good Friday Service is
at 10am on 2nd April
in the Ministry Centre.**

On Friday the 2nd April at 10am we meet for worship in the Ministry Centre. The Good Friday service is a solemn occasion where we gather with Mary, the Mother of God, Mary of Magdala and some of Jesus' friends to be with Jesus at the Cross, the place of his death.



EASTER

**Easter Dawn Service
on 4th April 6am
in the Church**

The climax of our easter journey is the dawn service held on the 4th April 6am in the Church.

- At **5.30am** **gather outside the church door** for the lighting of the Easter Fire.
- At 6am the Fire is blessed, and the Paschal Candle is lit.
- We walk into the church prayerfully, led by the Paschal Candle.

The Paschal Candle symbolises our faith in the Resurrection of Christ. Through chant, we remember how the presence of God, sometimes called Shekinah, has been our faith ancestors and will always be with us. The Paschal Candle is decorated with bees, butterflies and other symbols of the risen life. The candle is signed with the Alpha and Omega, Greek letters that remind us that Christ is the beginning and end of time and that all time belongs to Christ.

The Dawn service includes the renewal of our baptismal promises and we are sprinkled with water to remember the grace of our baptism. The service concludes with holy communion.



Easter Service (including families)
9am 4th April in the Ministry Centre

The Easter Service at 9am in the Ministry Centre includes the first Eucharist with the new Paschal Candle. Children are included in the worship of this service. The Scriptures, sermon and prayers will sustain us in our resurrected faith.

To summarise:

- 1 April Maundy Thursday Service
6pm in the Ministry Centre
- 1 April All-night vigil 7pm – 8am 2 April
in the Church
- 2 April Good Friday Morning Prayer
8am in the Church.
- 2 April Good Friday Service
10am in the Ministry Centre
- 4th April Easter Dawn Service
6am in the Church (arrive at 5.30am and gather
around the Easter fire)
- 4th April Easter Eucharist
9am in the ministry centre



Community engagement



Sew Helpful

Sew Helpful will now be meeting on the 2nd and 4th Mondays only.

Contact Carol: 0427326832



Repurposing Plastic: We have an opportunity to recycle plastic milk bottle tops and bread tags. These items sent to Adelaide where they are melted down and repurposed to assist people with disabilities. Items can be left at the collection point at the Op Shop. Contact person is John Noble.

Empowering Leadership

2021 Parish Council

Rector's Warden: Bruce Sharp

Warden: Jenny Noble

Parish Councillors: Phil Crandon, Des Fitzpatrick, Margaret Brown, Charlie Handley, Graham Ireland, Robyn Hannah, Carol Vidal, Amanda Middleton

Loving God, thank you for being our shield and strength. You are a God of compassion and faithfulness. Please protect, nourish and sustain our church leaders, the parish council, the ministry coordinators and the lay ministers through the work of your Holy Spirit. May they find rest and encouragement in your loving care. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Good Governance

COVID 19 & Church Services

Cleaning: Chairs need to be wiped over with detergent solution and dried after usage. Please lend a hand.

Singing: if wearing a mask singing is permitted.

Volunteers Needed Concierge: Members of the congregation are very much needed to provide a hand sanitising and welcoming face to the Op Shop. If you can spare 3 hours a week or fortnight on a Monday, Wednesday or Thursday between 9am and 3pm please call Paul Earner 0416280140.

Op Shop



Our Op Shop is now open Monday, **Wednesday** and Thursday. Thank you to all the wonderful volunteers.

Sermon notes

14th March (John 3:14-21)

Looking...Prayerfully

Today, John tells us more about Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus; the church leader who came to Jesus in the dark.

The story includes the well-known verse 3:16 - "for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life". This encouragement follows Nicodemus asking "how can a fully grown person be born again?"



The part of the story we heard today begins “And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” This is one of the places where John makes really clever use of word play. There’s a double meaning to “the Son of Man must be lifted up”. One meaning is “lifted up on the cross” and the other meaning is “lifted up in praise - exalted -glorified”.

Nicodemus would have recognized the connection here to our First Testament reading, Numbers 21. The plague of snakes in the wilderness came when people once more rebelled against God and Moses in yet another time of grumbling and murmuring. However, the people had a change of heart and came to Moses asking for forgiveness and confessing that they were wrong. Moses forgives and prays for the people who had cursed him. Moses who had been the person who told the people of Israel about God’s prohibition on making images, was now given instructions to make a graven image of a snake. A big ask!!!

God would keep alive those who were prepared to do as he demanded. God’s message was that, if bitten, the people should look at the serpent on the pole and be well. Obedience and trust were required.

So, in Numbers 21, we have a story of sin; this impatient nation again rebelled against God and had to be punished. The people wanted God to take away the serpents but God chose not to. A lesson that God’s way is not our way. It is also a story of grace; Moses interceded and God provided the remedy. The serpents

were not removed. They were left as a means to chastise and to test the faith and obedience of the people.

The big picture is that this is a story of faith. When the people looked by faith they were saved. It was not the sight of the serpent that saved them; but in looking up to the snake on the pole, they looked to God.

Adherents of the Cao Dai religion in Vietnam have a snake on a pole at their Holy See in Tay Ninh. The image of a snake or serpent curling around a staff has been a symbol of healing since before Jesus.

Well, what is the connection between Moses who lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, and the lifting up of the Son of Man? The ancient Israelites were guilty of disobedience and had a grumbling and unthankful spirit. They were unable to rescue themselves from the deadly poison. They were urged to look at the serpent on a pole in order to receive life. Salvation is a gift received only by believing God for it.

Is the connection that, just as a plague of snakes is remedied by one snake on a pole, the plague of human beings on earth is remedied by one man on a pole?

Jesus became the “uplifted serpent”. The serpent in Moses’ day brought physical life to dying Israelites. Jesus Christ gives eternal life to anyone who trusts (looks at) him. The whole world is bitten by sin. How is a person born from above? How is he or she saved from eternal



perishing? The Gospel says by believing on Jesus and by looking to him in faith.

Is the connection the lifting up; the looking in obedience and trust? Is there a connection between the wilderness which the people of God past and the people of God present are journeying through? Where do we fit into the story?

These are important questions. Eternal life is at stake – John says “everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life”.

It seems that the good news of God’s love offers only two options. Believe or perish! Encouragement comes in John 3:17 - “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him”.

The eternal life granted to believers refers not only to duration of existence but to quality of life contrasted with futility. Eternal life is a deepening and growing experience which doesn’t have an end. Eternal life is not restricted to the future; it’s very much related to current living.

The eternal life accepted by believing is a gift of God and brings with it the fullest blessings that God can give. Perish doesn’t mean to cease to exist; it means to experience utter failure, futility and loss of all that makes existence worthwhile.

All this leads to the most important question of all. How should we believe in the Son of Man? Belief isn’t stagnant. Belief is not something you can reach or grasp; it’s something you work at and you find has always more to achieve.

Now, what about our Lenten Study - the "Way of Love"?

On Ash Wednesday the first message was TURN. Then in the last three Sundays the focus was on REST, LEARN and WORSHIP. Today, the subject is PRAY. Prayer is a difficult topic which most people acknowledge is a concern for them. Methods of prayer are very different and very personal. In the Gospels, we often read that Jesus went to a quiet place to pray. I like to think that Jesus did not have a list of requests and questions when he went to pray. Perhaps for Jesus alone in a quiet place, prayer was not words but being intentionally in the presence of God.

The section in our "Way of Life" notes seems to agree as it has the heading "PRAY: Dwell intentionally with God daily". These notes go on to say "Jesus teaches us to come before God with humble hearts, boldly offering our thanksgivings and concerns to God or simply listening for God's voice in our lives and in the world. Whether in thought, word or deed, individually or corporately, when we pray, we invite and dwell in God's loving presence".

Here is a link with our Bible lessons today. How do we know we are dwelling in God's presence? Perhaps the answer is to be looking for God. As the people who were bothered by the snakes in the wilderness chose to look at the bronze serpent on the pole, so we choose to focus our minds.

We LOOK to Jesus "lifted up". We look in faith and trust. Looking to Jesus is lifegiving ... and looking to Jesus is a prayer.



ANGLICAN PARISH OF ALSTONVILLE

Ministers all the baptised!

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The Reverend Geoff Vidal 0447 645 456
The Reverend Doug Bannerman 0418 182 450
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The Anglican Op Shop

1 The Avenue, Alstonville
Tel: 6628 8777

Dates 21st March to 28th March

21st March Sunday 9am Holy Communion
22nd March Monday 10am Anam Cara Praying for You
24th March Wednesday 9am Anam Cara
Lent Study 11am-12.30pm
25th March Thursday 4-5.30pm Lent Study
6pm Anam Cara
26th March Friday 10am Holy Communion
28th March Sunday 9am Holy Communion
10am Holy Communion St Peter & St Paul's

**Alstonville Religious Education Association
presents the
2021 AREA BREAKFAST**

Saturday 27th March
Alstonville Baptist Church
Wardell Road, Alstonville
7:30am – 9:30am



Fruit juice, cereal, tea, coffee, bacon, eggs
Hear Bruce Fleming speak about the work he does at
Alstonville High School \$15 per person
All funds raised go to AREA to support Bruce's work.

**Please RSVP by Wednesday 24 March to
0414 285 132**