



Alstonville Anglicans

Sunday 26th February 2023

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 26th February to 5th March

26 th Feb		Sunday Holy Communion
	9am	
27 th Feb		Monday Parish Office Open
	9am-12pm	
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	10am	Anam Cara
28 th Feb		Tuesday Parish Office Closed
1 st Mar		Wednesday Parish Office Open
	9am-12pm	
	9am	Anam Cara
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	3.30pm	Property Committee Meeting
	4pm	Messy Church Meeting
2 nd Mar		Thursday Parish Office Open
	9am-12pm	
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	9.30am	Play Place
	6pm	Anam Cara
3 rd Mar		Friday Parish Office Open
	9am-12pm	
	10am	Holy Communion
4 th Mar		Saturday
5 th March		Sunday Holy Communion Bishop's Visit
	9am	
	11.30am	Rocky Creek Dam Picnic

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. http://www.welcomeBooklet_v3.pdf

Lenten Life Groups



Commencing 1st week in March. Facilitators meeting Thurs 23rd Feb 4pm. Contact Greg Ezzy : 0412 660 742.

World Day of Prayer

Friday 3rd March 1.30pm

Uniting Church, crn Main St & Bugden Ave, Alstonville.
For more information contact Olwen King 6628 0522.

Bishop's Visit

Sunday 5th March

Property Committee Meeting

Wednesday 1st March 3.30pm

Messy Church Meeting

Wednesday 1st March 4pm

Parish Picnic Rocky Creek Dam

Sunday 5th March 11.30am. Please let the office know if you would like to come but need a lift.

COVE Meeting

Saturday 11th March 3pm

AREA says 'Thanks'

Thanks to the many supporters who attended our movie night Sunday 12th Feb. It raised \$700 for continuing Bruce Fleming's excellent Christian "mission" at Alstonville High School. Your support is much appreciated. John Noble

Safe Ministry Training

Thanks to all those who quickly responded to your letters. As a Result, we will be having the following workshops.

1. Faithfulness in Service

Saturday 11th March 9am-12pm in the Ministry Centre.

2. Safe Church Awareness

Renewing – Saturday 22nd April

Initial Training - a Saturday in August (date to be advised)

Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group

Bishop-in-Council has resolved to establish a Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group and is seeking expressions of interest from people within our parishes and ministry units for membership. No prior experience with RAPs is necessary. **Reconciliation Australia** has resources that can provide you with further information. To express interest, please email admin@graftondiocese.org.au with name, contact details and some information about the person who is expressing interest, by Friday 10 March.

Community Engagement



Worship & Spirituality

A vibrant, cartoon-style illustration of a swimming pool scene. It features a watermelon ring, a red crab, a yellow giraffe, a pink flamingo, a white unicorn, and a yellow duck, all floating in blue water with white bubbles.

SWIM PARTY
Messy Church
Sunday 26th February 4pm
Carol & Anthony's
10 Higgins Place Cumbalum
Bring swimmers & sunscreen BYO nibbles
Pizzas \$10 per family
Phone: 66280231
anglicans.live

Sermon Notes 19th February 2023

Transfiguration

Exodus 24.12-18 Matthew 17.1-9

*And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun,
and his clothes became dazzling white. (Matthew 17.2)*

I wonder if you can imagine what it would be like to truly experience the kind of relationships that exist within the Holy Trinity, the most succinct expression of which is "I and the Father are one" (John 10.30). A close parallel is a mutual state of being "in Love". As Freud would have it, ego boundaries dissolve, and the couple can sit for hours on a riverbank on a balmy summer's day without speaking a word, and they experience a blissful sense of communion, of one-ness.

Now, I have long wondered who, in reality, was transfigured. Was it Jesus? Was it Peter, James and John? Was it all of them?



In my mind, there is an issue of translation, and another issue to do with perception, the way we see things, our points of view, our perspectives, and our unconscious assumptions and biases, not the least of which is to think in dualistic terms – as if there is no other way of thinking or being. This is not, by the way a fault in our make-up. Human beings are born with brains hard wired to think in terms of black or white, good or bad, and so on. It provides a means of comparing this and that, an early learning mechanism.

But it means that the language meanings we learn and use are also dualistic. On the other hand, the mind-set of pretty well all the Wisdom traditions in the world is characterised by so-called unitive thinking and states of being.

The Wisdom traditions encompass both kinds of perception and being. In our mythology for example, the Garden of Eden is place of unity, non-duality, non-duality of male and female, non-duality of human and God, non-duality of good and evil. All is one, and duality cannot exist in the Garden. So, to eat the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil excludes the man and the woman from that unitive state of being in which they were one. But that is not the whole story; there is another tree in the garden, the tree of immortal life (Genesis 2.9), and the Christ figure on the second tree in the Garden is the fruit of the tree of immortal life, when you know that “I and the Father are one”.

As Joseph Campbell succinctly put it, "You have to have a balance between death and life, the two aspects of the same thing which is being-becoming".¹

The Lady Julian of Norwich knew this as a fundamental truth. In her Revelations of Divine Love, she wrote "The soul is preciously knitted to Him [Jesus] in its making by a knot so subtle and so mighty that it is oned with God. In this oneing, it is endlessly holy."²

Matthew tells us that Jesus' face "shone like the sun", which seems to be an echo of the second time Moses come down Mount Sinai carrying the "Ten Better Ways" (Exodus 34.29). That account says that Moses' face was shining; but the Hebrew word thus translated is קָרַן qaran (kaw-ran'), meaning to send out rays. Perhaps Matthew's expression "his face shone like the sun" is coloured by his knowledge of the Book of Exodus?

All this leads me to think that it was Peter, James and John who were transfigured to a brief state of unitive thinking and being, which enabled them to perceive the reality of Jesus' being, what Campbell called "being-becoming" and the Lady Julian called "oneing". And I am willing to bet that Jesus had been teaching them how to meditate according to one of the contemplative practices of his day. What else would they be doing up in a mountain – playing tiddlywinks?

The Wisdom traditions of all the major religions aspire to a unitive state of being. Unfortunately, the Christian Wisdom tradition was all but snuffed out in the third century when our canon of scripture was effectively set in concrete. In essence

contemporaneous
Wisdom writings were
deemed to be heretical.

Nevertheless, the spirit
of Wisdom writing was
preserved by divines like
Lady Julian of Norwich,
the unknown author of
The Cloud of Unknowing,
Hildegarde of Bingen,
Nicolas of Cusa, and



Meister Eckhart, to name but a few. And it is alive and well
today in both the secular and religious realms.

In 1982, neurologist and Zen practitioner James Austin felt a
“sense of enlightenment” unlike anything he had ever
experienced. His sense of individual existence, of separation
from the physical world, evaporated like morning mist. He saw
things “as they really are”. The sense of “I, me, mine”
disappeared. His old yearnings, loathings, fear of death and
insinuations of selfhood vanished. “I had been graced,” he said
“by a comprehension of the ultimate nature of things.”³ his
experience spurred his subsequent research during which he
discovered that the so-called “orientation association area”
of the brain⁴ processes information about space and time, and
about the orientation of the body in space. It also determines
where the body ends and the rest of the world begins.
Significantly the intense concentration of meditation blocks
sensory inputs to this part of the brain. With no information
from the senses arriving, the orientation area cannot find any
boundary between the self and the world. And so, the brain

seems to have no choice but "to perceive the self as endless and intimately interwoven with everyone and everything", a feeling of infinite space.⁵

Likewise intense prayer, uplifting ritual or liturgy, sacred music, drumming, dancing, incantations and chanting can all soften the boundaries of the self, giving rise to a sense of oneness and spiritual unity. Slow chanting, soft liturgical melodies and whispered ritualistic prayer all seem to work their magic in much the same way: they turn on the hippocampus directly and block neuronal traffic to some brain regions.

So, science informs us that when we have this experience of unitary states, we are not going mad. It does, however, seem to beg the question of how valid our spiritual experience is. But that, really, is more a matter of faith. Personally, I believe that God created my brain wiring, not the other way around.

The drawcard is the state of being in which all is one, and countless people are drawn to find their way there in the course of their spiritual journey. Whether one is Christian or Muslim or Jewish or Buddhist or Atheist or Hindu or Animist – these matter not. Every human being on this planet is, willy-nilly, on a spiritual journey of one sort or another.



T S Eliot's Four Quartets express this theme with compelling clarity. The poem is a faith journey in itself, beginning with an introduction to beauty – a sumptuous, ecstatic,

innocent, erotic beauty discovered in the rose garden of Burnt Norton.⁶

Evocative images of wholeness dominate the opening sequence. The hopeful, almost palpable presence of roses merges with impressions of a rising lotus plant, an abrupt influx of sunlight, the song of the thrush, and overtones of unheard music. But along the way, Eliot also traverses sites of disaffection, deprivation, doubt and darkness.

Little Gidding, the last poem of the sequence (my favourite), is steeped in experiences of strife and affliction.⁷ But this is tempered by a sublime vision of divine love, which transfigures previous impressions of the rose, and likewise transfigures images of dissolution into Pentecostal flame.

Eliot masterfully illuminates the spiritual link between apparent opposites, between fire and rose, an “impossible union of spheres.” And so, he says, “We shall not cease from

exploration,” enticing us toward the idea of spiritual journey, continuous development, creation in process, little steps, rather than searching vainly for that one pearl of great price, the overpowering moment, the epiphany to end all epiphanies.

And, leaning a little on the Lady Julian of Norwich, he concludes:



With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always –
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flame are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one.
Doug Bannerman © 2023

¹ See Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyers "The Power of Myth", Episode 4.

¹ Chapter 53 of *Revelations of Divine Love*

¹ Sharon Begley "Religion And The Brain" 5/6/01 at 8.00pm EDT

<https://www.newsweek.com/religion-and-brain-152895>

¹ A bundle of neurons in the superior parietal lobe

¹ Ibid

¹ John Gatta *The Transfiguration of Christ and Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: WIFP & STOCK 2011) ¹ Ibi

Sentence of the Day

Return to the Lord your God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. Joel 2.13

Collect

Gracious God,
out of your love and mercy
you breathed into dust the breath of life,
creating us to serve you and one another:
call forth our penitence and acts of love,
and strengthen us to face our mortality,
so that we may look with confidence for your salvation;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Matthew 4.1-11

¹ Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ² He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.'
⁴ But he answered, 'It is written, "One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' '
⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,
"He will command his angels concerning you",
and "On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone."' '
⁷ Jesus said to him, 'Again it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test."' '
⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour; ⁹ and he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'
¹⁰ Jesus said to him, 'Away with you, Satan! for it is written,
"Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him."' '
¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.