



Alstonville Anglicans

First Sunday of Advent

Sunday 28th November 2021



Image by Daniela Mackova from Pixabay

Sharing the Good Life

We acknowledge the Bundjalung people,
traditional custodians of the Land.
Our doors are open: LGBTQIA+ welcome here.
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About Advent

Welcome to Advent! Advent is the four weeks in which we get ready for the mystery of Christmas. Advent is a time of spiritual darkness for us where we are set free to engage with doubt and the shadow side of spirituality. I commend the following article by Barbara Brown Taylor for your Advent preparation. I would be interested to hear your thoughts in response to what follows below: Email me at priest@anglicans.live.

In Praise of Darkness

“Darkness” is shorthand for anything that scares me — that I want no part of — either because I am sure that I do not have the resources to survive it or because I do not want to find out. The absence of God is in there, along with the fear of dementia and the loss of those nearest and dearest to me. So is the melting of polar ice caps, the suffering of children, and the nagging question of what it will feel like to die. If I had my way, I would eliminate everything from chronic back pain to the fear of the devil from my life and the lives of those I love — if I could just find the right night-lights to leave on.

At least I think I would. The problem is this: when, despite all my best efforts, the lights have gone off in my life (literally or figuratively, take your pick), plunging me into the kind of darkness that turns my knees to water, nonetheless I have not died. The monsters have not dragged me out of bed and taken me back to their lair. The witches have not turned me into a bat. Instead, I have learned things in the dark that I could never have learned in the light, things that have saved my life over and over again, so that there is really only one logical conclusion. I need darkness as much as I need light.



The problem is that there are so few people who can teach me about that. Most of the books on the New York Times "How-To" bestseller list are about how to avoid various kinds of darkness. If you want to learn how to

be happy and stay that way, how to win out over your adversaries at work, or how to avoid aging by eating the right foods, there is a book for you. If you are not a reader, you can always find someone on the radio, the television, or the web who will tell you about the latest strategy for staying out of your dark places, or at least distract you from them for a while. Most of us own so many electronic gadgets that there is always a light box within reach when any kind of darkness begins to descend on us. Why watch the sun go down when you could watch the news instead? Why lie awake at night when a couple of rounds of Moonlight Mahjong could put you back to sleep?

I wish I could turn to the church for help, but so many congregations are preoccupied with keeping the lights on right now that the last thing they want to talk about is how to befriend the dark. Plus, Christianity has never had anything nice to say about darkness. From earliest times, Christians have used "darkness" as a synonym for sin, ignorance, spiritual blindness, and death. Visit almost any church and you can still hear it used that way today: *Deliver us, O Lord, from the powers of darkness. Shine into our hearts the brightness of your Holy Spirit, and protect us from all perils and dangers of the night.*

Since I live on a farm where the lights can go out for days at a time, this language works at a practical level. When it is twenty degrees outside at midnight and tree branches heavy with ice are crashing to the ground around your house,

it makes all kinds of sense to pray for protection from the dangers of the night. When coyotes show up in the yard after dark, eyeing your crippled old retriever as potential fast food, the perils of the night are more than theoretical. So I can understand how people who lived before the advent of electricity — who sometimes spent fourteen hours in the dark without the benefit of so much as a flashlight — might have become sensitive to the powers of darkness, asking God for deliverance in the form of bright morning light.

At the theological level, however, this language creates all sorts of problems. It divides every day in two, pitting the light part against the dark part. It tucks all the sinister stuff into the dark part, identifying God with the sunny part and leaving you to deal with the rest on your own time. It implies things about dark-skinned people and sight-impaired people that are not true. Worst of all, it offers people of faith a giant closet in which they can store everything that threatens or frightens them without thinking too much about those things. It rewards them for their unconsciousness, offering spiritual justification for turning away from those things, for “God is light and in him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5).

To embrace that teaching and others like it at face value can result in a kind of spirituality that deals with darkness by denying its existence or at least depriving it of any meaningful attention. I call it “full solar spirituality,” since it focuses on staying in the light of God around the clock, both absorbing and reflecting the sunny side of faith. You can usually recognize a full solar church by its emphasis on the benefits of faith, which include a sure sense of God’s presence, certainty of belief, divine guidance in all things, and reliable answers to prayer. Members strive to be positive in attitude, firm in conviction, helpful in relationship, and

unwavering in faith. This sounds like heaven on earth. Who would not like to dwell in God's light 24/7?

If you have ever belonged to such a community, however, you may have discovered that the trouble starts when darkness falls on your life, which can happen in any number of unsurprising ways: you lose your job, your marriage falls apart, your child acts out in some attention-getting way, you pray hard for something that does not happen, you begin to doubt some of the things you have been taught about what the Bible says. The first time you speak of these things in a full solar church, you can usually get a hearing. Continue to speak of them and you may be reminded that God will not let you be tested beyond your strength. All that is required of you is to have faith. If you still do not get the message, sooner or later it will be made explicit for you: the darkness is your own fault, because you do not have enough faith.

Having been on the receiving end of this verdict more than once, I do not think it is as mean as it sounds. The people who said it seemed genuinely to care about me. They had honestly offered me the best they had. Since their sunny spirituality had not given them many skills for operating in the dark, I had simply exhausted their resources. They could not enter the dark without putting their own faith at risk, so they did the best they could. They stood where I could still hear them and begged me to come back into the light.

If I could have, I would have. There are days when I would give anything to share their vision of the world and their ability to navigate it safely, but my spiritual gifts do not seem to include the gift of solar spirituality. Instead, I have been given the gift of lunar spirituality, in which the divine light available to me waxes and wanes with the season. When I go out on my porch at night, the moon never looks the same way twice. Some nights it is as round and bright as a

headlight; other nights
it is thinner than the
sickle hanging in my
garage. Some nights it
is high in the sky, and
other nights low over
the mountains. Some
nights it is altogether
gone, leaving a vast
web of stars that are



brighter in its absence. All in all, the moon is a truer mirror
for my soul than the sun that looks the same way every day.

*Barbara Brown Taylor is the author of "Learning to Walk in
the Dark" (HarperOne), from which this piece is excerpted.*

Liturgy for 28th November

Sentence of the Day

Stand up and raise your heads; your redemption is drawing
near. Luke 21.28

Collect

Eternal God,
you have taught us that the night is far spent
and the day is at hand:
keep us awake and alert, watching for your kingdom,
and make us strong in faith,
so that when Christ comes in glory to judge the earth,
we may go out joyfully to greet him;
and, with all your saints, may worship you for ever;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Readings

Luke 21:25-36

²⁵ "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. ²⁶ People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. ²⁸ Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near." ²⁹ Then he told them a parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees; ³⁰ as soon as they sprout leaves you can see for yourselves and know that summer is already near. ³¹ So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³² Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all things have taken place. ³³ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. ³⁴ "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day does not catch you unexpectedly, ³⁵ like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

Messages

Pastoral Care



To make you smile...

What happens if you drop your iPad and your iPhone in the water? They sync!

Prayers

Please remember in your prayers this week our friends at St Peter and St Paul's. 28 November 2021 marks the closing of the worship centre at Tregeagle.

Pastoral visits Remember!

If you or anyone you know is ill or in hospital, please let the office or Lynne Watt our Pastoral Care Coordinator know. Also, if you do visit anyone could you email Lynne? wattlg@bigpond.com.

Mothers Union: third Monday of each month. Contact Pam on 0417 258 991 or

Joyce 0407 690 874 joyce@stephanies.com.au .

Community Engagement

Community-On-the-Verge



Our garden is planted and thriving!
Help yourself to what is ripe and ready for picking. If you are keen to be involved as the garden evolves, please contact Alan Larsen on 0409 655 123 or Barbara Fewtrell 0429 385 713

Garden update: Read this ...

A team meeting for the Community on the Verge was held on 20 November 2021. We were blessed with two community members at the meeting. For your info:

- Community on the Verge (CoVe) will be hosting a table at Bunnings Christmas markets **Thursday 9 December. Join us from 6pm!!!**
- Some upgrades to the current garden will start to happen, including edging and paving for accessibility, and seating.



Play Place

Play Place Thursdays 9.30am – 11.30am.

Play Place Christmas Party is on 9 December 2021.

Good News!

A team of 5 walkers were able to participate in the “KMS for Compassion”. \$250 was raised for refugees. Thank you Barry for your wonderful coordination and parishioners for your support.

Online ministry

Head to Anglicans Live YouTube channel to catch up on any of our discussion or service videos you may have missed. Have you subscribed? Get your friends and family to subscribe at: Anglicans Live YouTube channel.



Sew Helpful

Sew Helpful meet every 1st and 3rd Monday in the Ministry Centre.



Christmas Dinner in the Church

To celebrate being back in the Church together, we are planning a Christmas Dinner in the Church on Saturday 11th December. The cost will be approximately \$20.00.

Numbers are limited, so please ensure you book for this night of fellowship, music, and laughter by phoning Jenny on 0416 285 140 as soon as possible.

Good Governance

Finance: Supporting Alstonville Parish

Parish Provider is now Planned Giving

Prior to the recent Covid lockdowns, all in parishioners were asked to prayerfully consider their offertory giving. We were also asked to rethink our method of giving to consider Parish Provider in future.

The lack of services and therefore regular giving throughout the lockdowns has hindered the parish's finances at a time when we could ill afford it. This was compounded by zero activity at our amazing Op Shop where no income came to the parish. This was a direct example how planning to give helps support your parish more consistently.

For those currently using Parish Provider, you will have recently received a letter advising you that the change from AFGD to AFSA now requires you to reactivate your giving through "Planned Giving".

Please complete the application you received at your earliest convenience to ensure the continuity of your gifts to Alstonville Anglicans. If you are experiencing any difficulty with the new application, please contact the office for assistance.

Parish council will continue to promote electronic giving as the normal way. We pray for a day when every parishioner in the parish will embrace this method. Before Christmas we will be writing to you asking that you to embrace this way forward to ensure a stable future for Alstonville Anglicans.

Luke 6:38 "Give and it will be given to you."

Mowing roster: Barry Campey co-ordinates the Mowing Roster at St Bartholomew's. We have had some drop off the roster, and therefore need to request another couple of men or women to join the Roster. You will only need to do a few turns per year, in teams of 2-3 people. Please contact Barry on 6628 3089 if you can assist.

Worship and Spirituality

Invite your friends for Christmas



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

Save the date!



YOU ARE INVITED TO
ADVENT CAROLS AND READINGS
12 DECEMBER 9AM

with your friends at
ALSTONVILLE ANGLICANS
St Bartholomew's Church



Sermon notes for the 21st November Christ the king

Perhaps the most quoted man in history is Winston Churchill, e.g., "Stop interrupting me when I am interrupting you!" or "The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter."

Winston Churchill wanted to join the Allied forces when they landed on D-Day. He informed Eisenhower that he would be aboard HMAS Belfast on 6 June 1944 for the Normandy invasion. Churchill wanted to be there to give courage to the soldiers.

General Eisenhower was stressed. The last thing they needed was for Churchill to be killed in battle. He appealed to the king for help. King George wrote two letters to Churchill. In the second letter the king said that if the prime minister thought that it was his duty to witness the invasion then it was also his duty as king. Churchill backed down. He knew he could never expose the king to such danger.

These two YouTube clips give a visual story to what I've summarised, (note there is a language warning: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSZNA_32KOE <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znjyZkzldE4>)

It is true, isn't it? In war, the king is to be protected at all costs. The king rarely leads the charge into battle. Even in the game of chess, the king is well protected, and an averagely good chess player knows to castle early in the game.

Jesus however is the exact opposite. Jesus is our king but would rather sacrifice himself in love than protect himself. Jesus is our king but comes to serve rather than be served.

Today we celebrate the festival of Christ the king and the last day of the Christian year. The Vatican Council (Roman Catholic Church) offered the feast of Christ the King at the end of the year to represent the Universal Rule of Christ at the end of all time.

What is the meaning of Christ the King?

Today's feast day seeks to tell us that:

1. Jesus is the servant leader of my life at all times.

Christ the King is a profoundly political feast. If Jesus is the leader of my life then the ruling party is not, neither is the tribe I belong to. Jesus is the servant leader of my life thus Jesus determines my picture of the world and my picture of God. Money, power, education and status do not determine who I am and who I am becoming and who others are. If Jesus is the servant leader of my life then this is what defines me, fear does not define me. If Jesus is the servant leader of my life then this is what influences how I have relationships, who I have relationships with, how I do business and what business I do.

If you take this seriously, if you take Jesus as the servant leader of your life seriously, your life will be undone: the model that Jesus offers is friendship with poor, finding yourself in the silence and solitude of the desert and that the poor, the widow, the orphan and the foreigner are legitimate shareholders of your company! To have Jesus as the servant leader of your life is to go on a Biblical journey of transformation.

2. **God is in all things.**

God influences all aspects of life. God comes to you in gentleness. God is sometimes so gentle that God is almost invisible. God is in all things: In others words; God is in good things, in and broken things, God is in the happiest moment of your life God is in the saddest moment of your life both moments are contained in God. The worst thing and the best thing that have ever happened to you: God in Christ is there holding that moment, as Rohr says: "Either God is in all things, or we have lost the capacity for seeing God at all." This is a journey of discovering God at the deepest and most authentic level of your being and having discovered God there you realise that God is in others and all things. All things are being united into Christ into Christ our head. We discover God in the eternal now and the magnificent mundane. God is always available.

I offer these two experiences on the feast of Christ the King: Experience Jesus as the servant leader of your life and experiencing God in all things.

May you come to know God as the Soul of your soul,
May you know God as the Breath within your own breath
May you experience God deeply and discover God in others
and in all things.
God be with you.

ANGLICAN PARISH OF ALSTONVILLE

Ministers all the baptised!

Rector The Reverend Dr Desiree Snyman
0402 764 969 priest@anglicans.live

Associates	The Reverend John Kidson	0411 394 213
	The Reverend Geoff Vidal	0447 645 456
	The Reverend Doug Bannerman	0418 182 450
	The Reverend Greg Ezzy	0412 660 742

Parish Office: 8 The Avenue, Alstonville
Telephone: 6628 0231
Postal: PO Box 451, Alstonville NSW 2477
e-mail: office@anglicans.live
website: anglicans.live

Bank account: BSB 705 077 / Acc:00032931

The Anglican Op Shop

1 The Avenue, Alstonville **Tel:** 6628 8777

Dates 28th to 5th December

28 th Nov	Sunday 9am Holy Communion in the Church Sunday 10am St Peter & St Paul's
29 th Nov	Monday 10am Anam Cara Praying for You Parish Office 9am-12pm Op Shop 9am-3pm
30 th Nov	Tuesday Parish Office Closed Please refrain from visiting the Parish office on a Tuesday. This time is set aside for staff to work uninterrupted. Thank you.
1 st Dec	Parish Office 9am-12pm Op Shop 9am-3pm

Parish Council meeting 6pm in the Meeting Room

2nd Dec Parish Office 9am–12pm
Op Shop 9am–3pm
Thursday Anam Cara 6pm in Church

3rd Dec Friday 10am Holy Communion in Church
Parish Office 9am–12pm

4th Dec Sunday 9am Holy Communion in the Church

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.