



Alstonville Anglicans

Pentecost 13 - 30th August 2020

You are welcome to join us this week...

- Sunday@**9am Anglican Service of Worship in the Ministry Centre.**
- Or 10am connect via webpage www.anglicans.live
- Anam Cara – a meditation group. Wednesday 9am & Thursday 6pm. St Bartholomew's.
- Friday 10am **Anglican Service of Worship in the Ministry Centre.**



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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Thought for the Week

“pick up your cross and follow Jesus”

Last year, our petition to stop the closing of our Alstonville branch of the Commonwealth Bank failed, but I am sure that petitions for other causes will come our way. Petition signing is a very small step in getting involved. Have you thought about what might lead you to go further than just signing a petition? When would you step in with community and join an action group?

Our most common failure is not to step in and speak up. However, there can be times when stepping in before thinking it through might be wrong.

We see that in the Gospel today. Peter steps in without thinking. Last week, Matthew told us that Jesus said Peter is the rock upon which the Church is founded. Today, we read that he is the stone over which Jesus might stumble on his way to the Cross.

Peter is always a 'rock'. He can be a rock upon which the Church can be founded; but he also has the potential to be a rock which leads the church to stumble.

So often we disciples of Jesus fall into the same trap that Peter fell into. We boldly (or foolishly) try to tell Jesus what direction he should take.

Peter had found that the greatest thing in all his life was to know Jesus and now Peter also found that he had to stop trying to boss Jesus around.

Disciples are to be followers of Jesus, never people who try to tell Jesus which way he must go. That's not easy and it's probably why Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me".

(Matthew 16:21-28)

Pentecost 13

9am Liturgy

30th August 2020

Welcome and acknowledgment of country

Sentence of the Day

If you want to become a disciple of Jesus, deny yourself, take up your cross and follow him. Matthew 16:24-25

Opening Song

Woman in the Night

1. Woman in the night,
spent from giving birth,
guard our precious light;
peace is on the earth!

*Come and join the song
Women children men
Jesus makes us free to live again*

4. Woman at the feast,
let the righteous stare;
come and go it peace;
love Him with your hair!

*Come and join the song
Women children men
Jesus makes us free to live again*

7. Woman on the hill,
stand when men have fled;
Christ needs loving still,
though your hope is dead.

*Come and join the song
Women children men
Jesus makes us free to live again*

8. Woman in the dawn,
care and spices bring,
earliest to mourn,
earliest to sing!

*Come and join the song
Women children men
Jesus makes us free to live again*

Reading

Matthew 16:21-28

²¹ From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." ²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? ²⁷ "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. ²⁸ Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before

they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

Sermon

Intercessory Prayers

In peace we pray to you, Lord God.

Silence

For all people in their daily life and work;

**For our families, friends, and neighbours,
and for all those who are alone.**

For this community, our country, and the world;

For all who work for justice, freedom, and peace.

For the just and proper use of your creation;

For the victims of hunger, fear, injustice, and oppression.

For all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble;

For those who minister to the sick, the friendless, and needy.

For the peace and unity of the Church of God;

For all who proclaim the gospel, and all who seek the truth.

For Murray Harvey our bishop, and for all bishops and

other ministers;

For all who serve God in the Church.

For our own needs and those of others.

Silence.

Hear us, Lord.

For your mercy is great.

Final Song

God! As with silent hearts

1. God! As with silent hearts we bring to mind how hate and war diminish humankind, we pause, and seek in worship to increase our knowledge of the things that make for peace.

2. Hallow our will as humbly we recall the lives of those who gave and give their all. We thank you, God, for women, children, men who seek to serve in love, today as then.

3. Give us deep faith to comfort those who mourn, high hope to share with all the newly-born, strong love in our pursuit of human worth: 'lest we forget' the future of this earth.

4. So, God of Peace disarm our trust in power, teach us to coax the plant

of peace to flower.
May we, impassioned by your
living Word,
remember forward to a world
restored.

Words Frederik Kaan CCLI Song # 3162222
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Sermon Notes

I've always thought the basic theme of Christianity is that God is an all loving God. What is the "evidence" for this in that the same God sits by while dreadful things happen to beautiful people - both Christian and non-Christian?

Since suffering and 'dark night of the soul' seem to be a path to refinement and enlightenment can we assume God suffers or has suffered and that could mean God is being perfected.

God is an all loving God, what is the proof for this? "Love" and "God" are synonyms. The very energy of Love is God. The Ultimate Reality, God, and Love are the same thing. Love is the basic structure of reality. Love is the eternal pattern of the

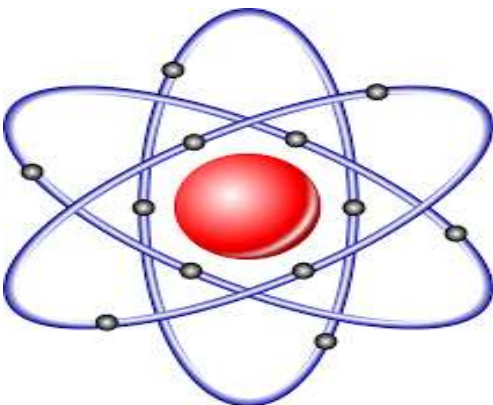
universe. I am sure you have heard of the story of the two fish swimming in the ocean, and the one fish asking the other fish where he might find water. The very essence of the ocean is water. The very essence of God is love. To prove that God is love is to prove that love is love, the reality that is all around us, in us and beyond us.

The question asked for proof of love as God or God as love. We structure our thinking around the three poles of understanding faith: Scripture, Tradition and Reason (logic, philosophy, and our reflection on experience).

Reason

The reason that we know love is love, love is God, or that God is love is because of experience. Through the gift of prayer, there is the taste of the immediacy of God as Love and the settled knowledge that this love is the realest real. I believe we are all mystics: any moment that anyone has either experienced, given or received love, they have at that very moment experienced God. The experience of the immediacy of God as love places us in the

lineage of billions of sages, saints, philosophers, religions, poets, and scientists since time began. The proof of love, and therefore of God, lies at the heart of what it means to be human; our very existence is because of our desire to give and receive love. Perhaps one example from the life of Frankly will do. In the midst of the greatest suffering that the Nazis could design, Victor Frankl came to the following conclusion: "Then I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved." The proof of love is the very basis of the universe, of matter.



The existence of matter is precisely because of the laws of attraction (love) in that protons and electrons unite to form atoms which forms molecules which become... matter.

Scripture

The Scriptures pronounce God as Love. 1 John 4:16 states the nature of God categorically: "God is love. Those who live in love live in God." Paul concurs with John: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord," (Romans 8:38-9). The New Testament continues the Old Testament teaching: "Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you," ([Isaiah 54:10](#)). The Scriptures introduce us to Jesus, the embodiment of God. The actions and teachings of Jesus are the lens through which we



The question invites us to question the reality of Love in the face of suffering. To state the obvious, suffering has puzzled humankind through the ages. Many theories have explained suffering, none of which I have found satisfactory, neither do I have any to offer and am left with remaining present to suffering without trying to fix it. One such theory suggests that suffering results from sin. Such a theory adds to the pain of suffering since a healthy dose of guilt because of sin hardly lightens the burden of suffering. The sin + punishment = suffering equation is not an adequate nor a universally applicable explanation either. The example of love embodied in the life of Jesus invites compassion as a response to those who cause suffering (love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you). Jesus broke the suffering = punishment-for-sin equation in John 9 when he healed the man born blind, making clear to everyone that blindness was just blindness, not a result of anyone's sin. I suggest we leave the equation broken and not resurrect it for

understand God as the energy of Love.

Tradition

If Scripture is a symphony of love, then church tradition provides the grand finale. The coherent centre of church tradition is the Trinity: the Father/Mother who pours all Her love into the Christ who receives His love and returns love in the Holy Spirit, the Bond of Love, the breath of love that binds Father/Mother God and Christ to each other. The Trinity is these three vitalities loving each other so much that they become one.



our current time. (e.g. No, Corona is not a punishment for sin).

The Buddhists teach that there is a difference between pain and suffering. Whilst pain is a highly unpleasant sensation we experience as part of the natural world, suffering is our response to pain. Suffering is how much we want things to be different. Freedom from suffering is possible when we let go of our responses, our fear and clutching. Buddhism invites equanimity, a stable mind free from wanting things to differ from what they are.

A reason I have never accepted many explanations for suffering is that it I cannot find a logical nor philosophical basis for why the reality of suffering nullifies the reality of love. I see the decision to love as accepting suffering. For example, it is because we love each other that

lockdowns have been painful. There is pain and suffering at funerals precisely because of love – those who love much also suffer much. The reason why people question the existence of God/Love in relation to suffering is more related to the Orthodox, Traditional belief that God is All Powerful and therefore able to stop pain, suffering and injustice.

Thomas Aquinas gave structure to Christian thought by marrying its teaching with Greek understandings, especially those explained by Aristotle. Thus, for centuries church tradition taught the Omnipotence, Omniscience, Immutability, and Impassibility of God: that God is All Powerful, All Knowing, Unchangeable and does not suffer. Yet such a view of God is in contrast to the God revealed to us in Scripture and in Jesus Christ. The life and death of Jesus reveal a God who gives up power for love and vulnerability. John 1 says the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This Christmas baby who we call God-with-us is vulnerable, not all powerful and thus unable to halt the path of suffering.

The unmitigated disasters of the 20th century grossly revealed the cracks in church tradition. In the face of the horrors of World War 2, many preachers, writers, and theologians reconceived of God as a God who suffers with us. Jurgen Moltmann's *A crucified God* epitomises the idea of God suffering alongside us. Since God suffers, God also changes.

Our second question follows on from Moltmann *et al* and takes as axiomatic that God suffers. Moreover, it takes to the limits the ideas of process theology, that God changes and is still changing. The questioner also then links suffering with the path of perfection.

Since suffering and 'dark night of the soul' seem to be a path to refinement and enlightenment can we assume God suffers or has suffered and that could mean God is being perfected.

I must admit it is an interesting idea, and a potential PhD research project. However, I suspect some nuance is needed in clearly defining the type of suffering that is being described

and also the tension between the finite and the Infinite.

Suffering caused by corrupt and despotic leaders, illness, death, loneliness, and broken relationships is radically different from suffering linked to bliss. For example, giving birth is painful yet parents are often blissful. Likewise, the suffering endured in the dark night of the soul is fully accepted as part of the bliss of total union with God.

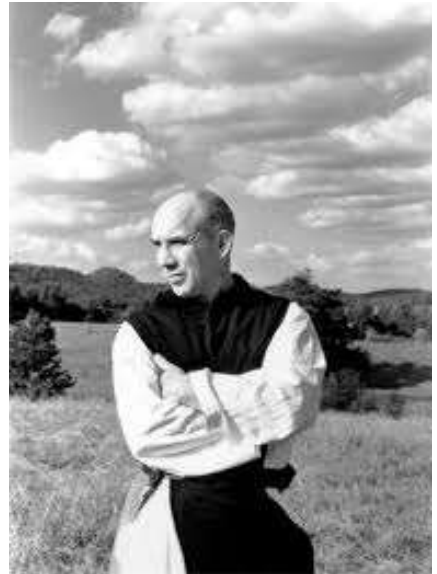
Doctors of the spiritual life such as St John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila and others explain that the journey to spiritual maturity is in roughly three stages: the purgative way, the illuminative way, and the unitive way. As we mature from the purgative path to the illuminative part, we experience the dark night of the senses. Here God withdraws God's presence from us, prayers are not answered and the



delights that we once enjoyed in worship and prayer are taken from us. As we journey from the illuminative way to the unitive way, we experience utter desolation – the dark night of the soul. The dark night of the soul is far beyond psychological or emotional pain, it is an existential crisis that cannot be treated medically or with therapy. The dark night of the senses and the dark night of the soul are a necessary refinement to wean us off the finite attachments in which we invest infinite value. For the soul that truly desires God, nothing less than God will do. It is for this reason that the earlier experiences of God's love, the comforts from God we once received are withdrawn; they are withdrawn to take us deeper into God. The suffering endured through the dark night of the soul transforms people totally. The evolution of human consciousness brought about by Infinite love releases us from our finite attachments. The whole point of Jesus was to help us trust our Union with God, to show us to be open to Infinite Love. Since God is Infinite, without attachment or clutching

or grasping or ego, no refinement is necessary, I sincerely doubt God has a dark night of the soul. God does suffer, but the suffering is because of God's solidarity with us, not because God undergoes a dark night. Perhaps some metaphors of God's suffering in solidarity may help. One example is parents suffering when they see their children in pain. Or the sadness that pastors, counsellors, or health professionals feel when people they care for are in pain.

I beseech you to sell all you have for the pearl of great price, and to embrace the suffering of the dark night of the soul for the



bliss of total union with God. Let us conclude a discussion on suffering with gravitas, in the words of Thomas Merton who so well describes what I in a limping fashion tried to portray:

“You will have gifts, and they will break you with their burden. You will have pleasures of prayer, and they will sicken you and you will fly from them. And when you have been praised a little and loved a little I will take away all your gifts and all your love and all your praise and you will be utterly forgotten and abandoned and you will be nothing, a dead thing, a rejection. And on that day, you shall possess the solitude you have so long desired. And your solitude will bear immense fruit in the souls of men you will never see on earth. “That you may become the brother of God and learn to know the Christ of the burnt men.”

Housekeeping

Our notices are organized under our mission goals.

Worship & Spirituality

Messy Church

Team Meeting 4pm Wednesday
2nd September

St Peter and St Paul’s

recommence services 30th August at 10am.

Prayer

Monday morning prayer where we pray for our church and the community will recommence in the church 7th September at 10am. You are welcome to pray with Rev Desiree at St Bartholomew’s or join in prayer from home.

Leadership

A Clergy Rendezvous will be held on Monday 31st August from 10am—2pm.

Good Governance Safe Ministry

To comply with our church / state regulations, John NOBLE (our Safe Ministry officer) will be completing a 6 month review - by 15th Sept. If YOU have recently completed any training (eg. First Aid certificate, Working with Children certificate, Criminal Records Check etc), please let John know (email : jnoble2477@gmail.com) AND provide a copy of those certificates to our office.

THANKS for being part of our team, demonstrating to our community that Alstonville Anglicans making positive

efforts to provide a "safe place for all".

P.S. Did you know?

Messy Church on 23rd August explored peace. We made origami swans, which are each a prayer for peace. Do you know what this symbol is?

Staff Leave

Anne Wareing will be on leave until the 7th September. Please contact Jo or Rev Desiree in her absence.

Admin

If you have recently lost a small key, please call in at the office to check if it is here.



Pastoral Care

If you are aware of anyone who needs or would appreciate Pastoral Care of ANY type (home communion, visits, meals, contact) please contact Lynne Watt on 66286751 or the office. Our Pastoral Care Team is here to care for you, but can only do so when we know your need.

Bi nka bi literally means "no one should bite the other". This symbol cautions against provocation and strife. The image is based on two fish biting each other's tails. It is important to dwell in peace and harmony with people as conflict and accord only result in the destruction of what took years to build.

ANGLICAN PARISH OF ALSTONVILLE

Ministers	all the baptised!	
Rector	The Reverend Dr Desiree Snyman 0402 764 969 priest@anglicans.live	
Associate	The Reverend John Kidson	0411 394 213
	The Reverend Geoff Vidal	0447 645 456
	Life Groups Chaplain	
	The Reverend Greg Ezzy	0412 660 742
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The Anglican Op Shop	1 The Avenue, Alstonville Tel: 6628 8777	