



Alstonville Anglicans

Sunday 5th March 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 5th March to 12th March

5 th Mar		Sunday
	9am	Holy Communion Bishop's Visit
	11.30am	Picnic Rocky Creek Dam
6 th Mar		Monday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	10am	Anam Cara
	1pm	Sew Helpful
	6pm	Spirit Ability
7 th Mar		Tuesday
		Parish Office Closed
8 th Mar		Wednesday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am	Anam Cara
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
9 th Mar		Thursday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	9am-3pm	Op Shop
	9.30am	Play Place
	6pm	Anam Cara
10 th Mar		Friday
	9am-12pm	Parish Office Open
	10am	Holy Communion
11 th Mar		Saturday
12 th Mar	9am	Sunday
		Holy Communion

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](https://www.welcomeBooklet_v3.pdf)

Lenten Life Groups



Commencing 1st week in March.
Contact Greg Ezzy : 0412 660 742.

Welcome Bishop Murray

We warmly welcome Bishop Murray to our parish today.

Spirit Ability

Monday 6th March 6-8pm

Parish Picnic Rocky Creek Dam

Today 11.30am. All welcome. Let the office or one of the wardens know if you need a lift.

Plants for the Fete

Our 2023 Fete is coming up in May. Could you please start potting up suitable plants labelled with a name, description and a flower colour if applicable.

COVE Meeting

Saturday 18th March 3pm

Safe Ministry Training

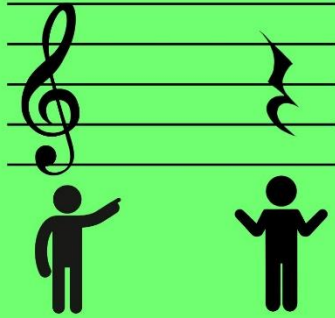
Thanks to all those who quickly responded to your letters. As a Result, we will be having the following workshops.

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



You are under a rest




**KEEP
CALM
AND
PICNIC**

Meet at
Rocky Creek Dam
on Sunday 5th
March 11.30am

BYO picnic & chairs

66280231
anglicans.live



CoVe
Community on the Verge
Garden

Meeting Saturday 18th
March 3pm

Leadership

Parish Leaders 2023

Rector

The Rev'd Dr Desiree Snyman

Associate Clergy

The Rev'd Geoff Vidal

The Rev'd John Kidson

The Rev'd Doug Bannerman

The Rev'd Greg Ezzy

Licensed Lay Ministers

Charlie Handley

Mark Stuckey

Barbara Fewtrell

Susan Fitzpatrick

Anne Walker

Wardens

Bruce Sharp

Jenny Noble

Graham Ireland

Councillors

Charlie Handley

Margaret Brown

Robyn Hannah

Des Fitzpatrick (Secretary)

Amanda Middleton (Chair)

Kaye Fry

Mark Stuckey

Synod Reps

Mark Stuckey

Robyn Hannah

Alternate Synod Rep

Anne Bryce

Treasurer

Anne Bryce

Safe Ministry Officer

John Noble

Op Shop Manager

Phil Cowie

Pastoral Care Coordinator

Lynne Watt

Social Coordinator

Amanda Middleton

Lay Ministry Coordinator

Helen Nicholson

Anam Cara Coordinator

Charlie Handley

Online Community Engagement

Robyn Hannah

Fridays @ 10 Coordinator

Geoff Vidal

Messy Church Coordinator

Barry Campey

COVE Coordinator

Desiree Snyman

Play Place Coordinator

Margaret Brown

Office Administrator

Jo Brooks

Ministry Administrator

Anne Wareing



Sermon Notes

26th February 2023

Lent 1 Matthew 4

About the text

From a literary point of view, the scripture today is fairly easy to unpack. First, the temptations roughly correspond to and follow on from the Ash Wednesday readings through which the Spirit drove us into the

wilderness of Lent. Lent is about fasting, prayer and almsgiving. The advice for keeping Lent is in Mathew 6:

- So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you...(almsgiving).
- But whenever you pray, go into your room, and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret...(prayer for the sake of others).
- Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites...(fasting).

The temptations described in Matthew 4 for Lent 1 correspond to Matthew 6 for Ash Wednesday. The temptation to turn rocks into bread (Matthew 4) relates to fasting (Matthew 6). The temptation to test God is about whether your prayer is in service of others or your own ego. Owning the kingdoms of the world and their splendour is about accumulating wealth or releasing wealth to the poor, the stranger and widows and orphans, the real shareholders of our excess.

A second aspect of our literary analysis relates to the intention of Matthew. We already know that the writer of Matthew's Gospel wanted to depict Jesus as the new Moses. The Gospel of Matthew is structured around this theme of Moses and draws obvious parallels between the life of Moses and the life of Jesus. Moses came from Egypt; Jesus came from Egypt. Moses went through the Red Sea, Jesus in his baptism goes through the Red Sea of the River Jordan. Legend has it that Moses wrote the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Jesus the fulfillment of the Torah will preach the new Torah in five sermons that structure the whole Gospel from chapters 5 onwards.

Third, there are other literary illusions that the writer of our Gospel today may want us to consider. When Jesus had passed his wilderness exam suddenly angels came and waited on him. The presence of angels remind us of Elijah's time in the wilderness. Elijah flees into the wilderness after Jezebel sets out to kill him. Hungry, tired, fearing for his life, totally alone, feeling like an utter failure, questioning the reality of God, Elijah is waited on by angels. The angels offer the best advice to anyone experiencing amygdala hijack when the prefrontal cortex has shut down any access to logic: eat something, drink something, have a nap.

There seems little point in unpacking in detail the meaning of the three temptations Jesus faced as it is unlikely that any of us will ever be tempted to change stones into bread and none of us would be tempted to jump off a high building to test whether God's angels will catch us. If we have those temptations we need a diagnosis, not a sermon. I want to talk about the wilderness and the tempter instead.

Our story in the text

In my prayer I sit with Jesus in the wilderness. In my prayerful imagination I find the whole experience of being in the desert with Jesus utterly attractive. I feel rejuvenated in the wilderness. The air is fresh and silent. The silence itself is nourishing, as is the solitude. Although I have a deep, deep love for people, the depth of my love for people is sustained by being alone and the aloneness with Jesus in the wilderness sunrise is stunning. I feel closer to God; there is something about the rawness of undomesticated wilderness that rewilds my inner spirit and strips off the ways I have tamed divinity. My inner architecture is reconfigured by the architecture of creation. Awe at the unthinkable, unsayable God pulsating at the heart of all that is, is breathtaking. In this desert I sense solidarity with the trees, the vegetation, and the insects and it instils a delicious a sense of oneness with Universe.

The pleasure at being in the wilderness is coloured by my experiences of going on Retreat at Sediba, a silent retreat centre in the mountains outside Johannesburg South Africa, to which I regularly escaped. Like Jesus I feel drawn to the wilderness by the Spirit. Like Jesus I am confident of the reality of God's love that calls me beloved. However, it is still the morning of the first few days of the retreat when the wilderness feels so attractive. It is usually on the evening of day four that the tempter arrives.

The wilderness that in the morning of the first day called out like a lover turns on you, betrays you. Sleep alludes you. Fears and terrors magnify. Mosquitoes the size of spitfires add to your torment and Lord have mercy, there are so many of them. The solitude that in the morning was nourishing has twisted into the



ugly monster of loneliness. The silence that was so stunning has become so very, very, very, loud. Who knew silence could be so deafeningly loud. The darkness and the silence magnify the slightest sound: your heartbeat sounds like an ear-splitting thunderstorm; the gurgle of your digestive tract sounds like the threatening waters of a flood. All mystical thought has taken flight, as has any thought of Scripture. You wonder if your sanity will survive the night of sheer and utter terror. And, where, the hell, (word chosen deliberately), is God?

The scripture describes 'ha satan', an accuser, a tempter. Perhaps the accuser is a metaphor for that internal, infernal voice of doubt and criticism. But let me tell you something, at two in the morning, alone in the dark, after no sleep, those terrors and fears take on demonic, solid form. So I can be comfortable with the translation of "the tempter" as "the devil". At my moments of greatest doubt and weakness the terror seems to have corporeal form.

Why would I peel back my skin and share a short excerpt of my minute wilderness experience? I unravelled like a cheap jumper on day 4, day 40 would destroy me. I suggest that the wilderness may be something we are all too familiar with, perhaps in different ways. In telling you my story of Matthew 4 I hope to remind you of your own desert experiences and that you are not alone in going through them.

I described Sediba, a silent retreat centre in the mountains outside the city of Johannesburg. I once took a priest friend and colleague with me on retreat. We had breath training at 4 in the morning followed by silent meditation from 5-7am. When he didn't rock up for meditation on the morning of the fifth day I went looking for him and found him on top of the concrete sealed reservoir where he had been facing his own terrors, all night. He told me hadn't slept. I said nothing. I put a blanket around him and sat in silence next to him, not because I was holy and meditating, but because there is nothing one can say. While I empathise with his struggle, it was a comfort to me to know that I am not alone in hearing 'demons' ; others fight them too.

This is why I told you my story of my experience of the scripture in Matthew 4. I hope to remind you of your own nights of terror. Wilderness spaces come in many shapes and sizes, as does the tempter.

At some point we all sit for 40 days and 40 nights in the desert wasteland. St John describes the inner wasteland of loneliness, doubt, emptiness, and bone-numbing fatigue as a dark night of the senses or a dark night of the soul. What about the dark night of sheer and utter terror that threatens to shatter your sanity?

For some, the wilderness may be the loneliness of the work car park, after you have been fired and have endured the humiliation of packing up your desk and have been marched out the office building by security because that is 'company policy'. For others it may be the recovery room in a hospital where you think you may never recover from yet another miscarriage. For others it is the deafness of the silence after a diagnosis from a doctor. For some people the wilderness is the sheer loneliness after the funeral of a much-loved spouse or the unending ache after divorce.

Whatever shape our wilderness takes, and whatever voice the tempter has, the point is that the wasteland is an aspect of our spiritual journey which we cannot do without. Nor should we want to. There is no way around the desert, you can only go through it. While never pleasant, the desert frees us. The wilderness experiences strips us right down to our True Self that is and always was naked and one with the Divine. The God of our Sunday School teachers and the God of our preachers and parents dies. We rebuild our inner being on the foundation of our own faith. Our own faith is hard won through wrestling accusers, tempters, demons and even angels that kick us in the hip before blessing us and leaving us to limp out of the desert forever crippled, but richly blessed by the experience.

The desert sand also blasts our eyelids off so that we can no longer close them to the pain of the world. Our eyelids are ripped off by desert sand and our watering eyes look through the ordinariness of our society to diagnose the sickness that ordinariness masks. Any wilderness restores our authenticity, it prevents us from being too comfortable with the temptations we have habitually accepted and considered normal and ordinary.

Hannah Arendt's book "*Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*" offers a chilling, hyperbolic but true example of what happens

when we refuse to go through the pain of the wilderness and attempt to go around it. Hannah's interpretation of temptation is that:

Many Germans and many Nazis, probably an overwhelming majority of them, must have been tempted *not* to murder, *not* to rob, *not* to let their neighbours go off to their doom, and not to become accomplices in all these crimes by benefiting from them.

Hannah then concludes that the Germans had learnt to resist temptation. Hannah's book shows us that we could become so comfortable in our day to day routines that we no longer question their very ordinariness, even when these ordinary processes automatise the wholesale murder of neighbours and friends.

Even Jesus' invitation to be the Christ and to follow him are so well worn we no longer hear it and see it. However, our response to being in the wilderness defines our willingness to be truly God's. May the Spirit who whispered your true name, "beloved of God", who filled you then sent you into the desert, support you in your furnace of transformation.

Sentence of the Day

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. John 3.16

Collect

God of mercy,
you are full of tenderness and compassion,
slow to anger, rich in mercy,
and always ready to forgive:
grant us grace to renounce all evil and to cling to Christ,
that in every way we may prove to be your loving children;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

John 3.1-17

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.' ³ Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.' ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?' ⁵ Jesus answered, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, "You must be born from above." ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.' ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?' ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, 'Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ 'Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 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. 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.