



Alstonville Anglicans

Twenty-Fourth Sunday of Pentecost

Sunday 7th November 2021



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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Liturgy for 7th November

Sentence of the Day

And a great multitude, from every nation and tribe and people and language, cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' Revelation 7.10

Collect

Eternal God,
neither death nor life can separate us from your love:
grant that we may serve you faithfully here on earth,
and in heaven rejoice with all your saints
who ceaselessly proclaim your glory;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Readings

John 11:32-44

³² When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." ³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. ³⁴ He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." ³⁵ Jesus began to weep. ³⁶ So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" ³⁷ But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" ³⁸ Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. ³⁹ Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." ⁴⁰ Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would

see the glory of God?" ⁴¹ So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." ⁴³ When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go."

Messages

Pastoral Care

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

The MU meetings are held on the 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

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Community-on-the-Verge garden working bee. Your time and energy are greatly appreciated.



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



Earth Vigil



Thank you to everyone who helped make the Earth Vigil a reality A big congratulations and thank you to Gladys Charter who created this remarkable art installation for the Earth Vigil



Play Place

Play Place Thursdays 9.30am – 11.30am

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: Anlicans Live YouTube channel.](#)



Sew Helpful

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

Church Mowing Roster

New roster commencing 15th November. Men and women are invited to be part of a team for the next 12 months. Typically teams have 3 or 4 turns per year. Contact Barry Campey 6628 3089

Refugees

Please support 'Ballina Region 4 Refugees'

An urgent request from Benjamin Gilmour a local Film Director and Supporter of BR4R: looking for volunteers to fill out Humanitarian Visa forms for Afghan creatives

Dear Community,

I am an Australian filmmaker living in the Ballina region. My last film, JIRGA, was shot entirely in Afghanistan where I worked with Afghan filmmakers and musicians.

With the return of the Taliban regime these artists are now at great risk. The Taliban have a strict interpretation of Islam that considers music to be haram (forbidden). Seems they aren't aware of the great history of music in Islamic cultures or that Muslims invented the Oud, which became the lute and then guitar. In any case, Afghan musicians

are no longer able to play. Some have been targeted for ignoring restrictions, and there have been reports of killings. No wonder some of the musicians I know have burned or buried their instruments.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

We are looking for volunteers to fill out Humanitarian Visa forms. Each volunteer will be assigned one or two individuals and their families and will need to work on the application by communicating with these applicants.

Filling out one of these forms is **time consuming**. Especially given the back-and-forth with the applicants in Afghanistan. It can take a couple of weeks per application and is a challenge on several levels and will involve:

- Communicating with the applicants and navigating the eccentric responses of Google translate in order to gather all the required information and documents
- Working on an extensive PDF document application form, and shaping their story in the section where they need to show a well-founded fear.
- A good knowledge of email, WhatsApp messaging and working with an editable PDF document (this is required by the lawyers)
- Confidentiality

If you feel this is something you can help work on, please be in touch to president@br4r.org.au or through my website below and we will provide you with the FORM and an applicant (or two!).

This is an exciting project to work on. We have already been informed by David Manne's NGO Refugee Legal that they will be happy to represent these 50 Afghan artists and work with us once all the forms are at a final draft stage.

To inspire you, here are some links to the folks on our list, playing their instruments.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jU2YuWdyyc8>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UvveWWUxFe4>

Warm regards to you all.
Benjamin Gilmour

Worship and Spirituality

Confirmation

Today we warmly welcome Bishop Murray and our confirmation candidates.

Messy Church

Messy Church Sunday 28th November at 4pm.



Anam Cara

Wednesday 9am & Thursday 6pm

Messy Life Church?!

Messy Life Church?! 7th November 5pm

Sermon notes for the 31st October

Psalm 119.1-8, Mark 12.28-34

Sometimes, upon hearing a time-honoured gospel passage like today's, I groan inwardly, because, dammit, I have read it so many times in the last 70 years or so, I feel like Job, when he is pestered by his well-meaning friends with endless words. He freaks out, saying, 'God has walled up my way so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths.' (Job 19.8)

The first [commandment] is, "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; ³⁰you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." (Mark 12.29,30)

This week, I was saved by the thought that this is one of the few times that Jesus agrees with a Scribe. I think I knew this before, but it has caught my attention now. Why?



Now, it is easy to forget that the scripture *in its entirety* is the Word we must hear; so, we must not attach the label 'God's Word' willy-nilly to this or that fragment. Nevertheless, this saying lies at the core of the gospel Jesus was so intent on purveying. So let us to continue.

It is also, as I have implied, easy to tune out as we tread the familiar paths of life, as with our practices of spirituality. If I am a 'conservative,' that path may be predominantly sacramental, holding a view of God as the reliable source behind it all — 'God arranging the church and its observances as the best means available for me to get to Him.'¹

On the other hand, if I am a 'radical,' God disturbs the social order, calling me to freedom and creative action — the God of the future, of a new and liberated humanity. However, both these forms are basically religious games that comfort and justify us in the style of religious life we find agreeable.

Job was conservative; and we encounter him subjected to an experience known since the 16th century as the 'night of the spirit' — what many people misguidedly think of as a profound religious experience, a dramatic mystical sharing in the sufferings of Christ. It is, however, nothing of the sort. That is actually the *end* of religious experience, the opposite of mysticism.

The night of the spirit is, in fact, the wall Job spoke of, the evacuation of meaning. We follow the daily patterns of life, and suddenly discover that our path encircles an emptiness and meaninglessness that makes a nonsense of all religions and all piety.²

We may arrive at this awareness of emptiness in a variety of ways. It may be a nexus of personal growth, in which words and books become meaningless. There is only nonsense, darkness, and a sense of

¹ Rowan Williams *A Ray of Darkness* (Cowley Publications: Plymouth UK 1995) p80

² *ibid*

lostness. It may arise from a personal crisis wherein the cheapness and falsity of glib religious patterns appear for what they really are. Again, words like 'liberation' and 'justice' become devoid of meaning in the light of the apparently incurable destructiveness of human beings. Or it can be the bursting of pent-up frustration with the church and the liturgy.³

The experience is the same, however we may arrive at it — a breakdown of order, of schemes and maps, and of religious meaning. Nothing to hold on to. 'We talk to an iron heaven, empty of signs.' remarked Rowan Williams.⁴

The 16th century Saint, John of the Cross, analysed the 'dark night' with unparalleled clarity. The real question, he wrote, is what do you *really* want? Do we want 'spirituality,' mystical experience, inner peace, or do we want God? St John goes on to suggest that if we want God, then we must let go of *all* substitute intellectual and emotional satisfactions — recognise that God is so unlike any our own ideas or mental images that, when we have gone beyond self-indulgent religiosity, there will be nothing we can securely know or feel.

'The dark night,' said Williams, 'is God's attack on religion. If you genuinely desire union with the unspeakable love of God, then you must be prepared to have your "religious" world shattered.'⁵

To labour a point, if we think that devotional practices, theological insights, or charitable actions give us some sort of purchase on God, we are still playing religious games.⁶ On the other hand, if we *are* able to face and accept the experience of darkness, to accept that God is more than an idea that keeps our religion or politics or philosophy tidy, then we can find our way back to an engagement with them (religion, politics, philosophy, or whatever) that is more creative, because we are now more aware of the truth at the heart of all things.

This, actually, is what detachment means — not being 'above the battle' so to speak, but being involved in such a way that we can confront whatever comes to us with an integrity bolstered by truth and honesty, and without fearing the unknown.

³ *ibid*

⁴ *op cit* Williams p 81

⁵ *op cit* Williams p 82

⁶ *ibid*

And so to Love. The first (and best) commandment is to Love God. And if we are to *truly* Love God, then it follows that we must have some kind of intimate relationship with God.



Jesus is the one human being I know of who enjoys unconditional intimacy with God, and so perhaps He may serve as a model that we may follow. It is, however, an intimacy that includes Gethsemane, which is where Jesus gives himself wholly into his Father's hands, come what may, confident that nothing can break their communion.

But what happens is Calvary, where God seems to be unavailable, unable to help his Son. Darkness descends, or rather, Jesus enters the Darkness of his own free will.

If we follow the trail of this model, we make a similar commitment to God, all of which demands that I do not try to shape the truth to my own wants and needs, but simply accept the truth of reality as it is. This, finally, is what Jesus did.

Love your God with all the you have. Alas, I do not *have* anything but the dark. The only Love I have to offer is God's own Darkness.

One thing I must clarify here. God's Darkness is not human darkness. Humans, by and large, are scared, often terrified to enter it. But the terror arises from a suppressed awareness that the process can be extremely painful. Yet it is a place of utter safety, because we are totally in God's hands therein. As St John of the Cross framed it in his poem *Dark Night*:

O guiding night!
O night more lovely than the dawn!
O night that has united
The Love with His beloved,
Transforming the beloved in her Lover. ⁷

⁷ St John of the Cross *Dark Night* stanza 5, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh OCD and Otilio Rodriguez OCD

What scares us is the idea of losing the sense of who we are, and of where we are, for few if any of the old markers apply. The mystics refer to this place as the void or the abyss, and of the way that leads through it as the 'way-less way'.⁸ But, as St John indicates, we are secure and safe, because someone else has already walked there.

We still walk alone — in solitude; but Resurrection tells us that light is at the heart of the Dark. God's light, wherein an intimate relationship awaits the pilgrim.

Rowan Williams once remarked that 'a prayer that is content to stay in and endure the dark, to come back daily to the blank mystery of God, can be and should be the true wellspring of love and service.'⁹

I conclude with a snippet from T S Eliot's *East Coker*:

'I said to my soul, be still, and let the darkness come upon you
which shall be the darkness of God.'

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.
Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:
So the darkness shall be light, and the stillness the dancing.
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.
The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
of death and birth.¹⁰

So be it.

Doug Bannerman © 2021

⁸ See Sarah Bachelard *Experiencing God in a Time of Crisis* (Meditatio: United Kingdom 2017) p33

⁹ *ibid* p84

¹⁰ *East Coker* in T S Eliot *Four Quartets* (Faber and Faber: Bloomsbury House London 2019) pp25,26

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
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The Anglican Op Shop

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

Dates 31st October to 7th November

7 th November	Sunday 9am Holy Communion in Ministry Centre Messy Life Church?! 5pm in Ministry Centre
8 th November	Monday 10am Anam Cara Praying for You Parish Office 9am–12pm Op Shop 9am–3pm
9 th November	Tuesday Parish Office Closed
10 th Nov	Parish Office 9am–12pm Op Shop 9am–3pm Executive meeting 4pm
11 th Nov	Parish Office 9am–12pm Prayers RSL 10.30am Op Shop 9am–3pm Thursday Anam Cara 6pm in Church
12 th Nov	Friday 10am Holy Communion in Church Parish Office 9am–12pm
14 th Nov	Sunday 9am Holy Communion in Ministry Centre Sunday 10am St Peter & St Paul's