
The Mustard Seed



Armadale Uniting Church

Edition 19 Advent 2015

From the editors...

This edition of *The Mustard Seed* marks the season of Advent, with an Advent reflection from Bonhoeffer.

Then, we read about Margaret's journey in Faith and Ministry, and Peter Beale has written about the pilgrimage that he foreshadowed in last Advent's issue of *The Mustard Seed*.

There's a poem by Bill reflecting on Archangel Gabriel and John Wesley's views on the "nourishing" effects of diet and exercise are set out.

Also included are some photos of events that have involved the Church and some of our people.

— Bill Rush and Graeme Harris.

An Advent Reflection

It was December 1943, and another Advent had dawned for Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was one of eight hundred prisoners awaiting trial in Berlin's Tegel military prison – in his case for criticising the Nazi regime in a radio broadcast. Bonhoeffer loved Advent and had often preached sermons on this holy season of waiting and hope as a metaphor for the entire Christian life.

At this point Dietrich still hoped he might be released, perhaps even in time to spend Christmas with his family and nineteen year old fiancée Maria von Wedemeyer. It was not to be. Though he would be shifted to other prisons and concentration camps on the way to his eventual execution in April 1945, he would never escape the Nazi grasp. This fact did not diminish but rather deepened Bonhoeffer's reflections.

He wrote these words, "By the way, a prison cell like this is a good analogy for Advent; one waits, hopes, does this or that – ultimately negligible things – the door is locked and can only be

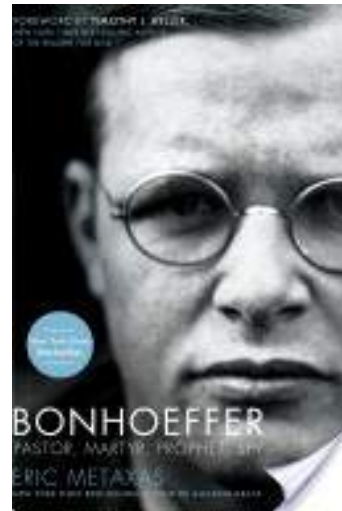
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opened *from the outside*". Reflecting on Advent and his own situation, he writes:

"Misery, sorrow, poverty, loneliness, helplessness and guilt mean something quite different in the eyes of God than according to human judgement; that God turns to the very places from which humans turn away; that Christ was born in a stable because there was no room for him in the inn. A prisoner grasps this better than others. And for them, this is truly good news."

From Bonhoeffer in Advent (by Timothy George). *First Things*, 15 December 2014



* * * * *

A CAROL SERVICE PRAYER

Lord, we've sung these carols and heard this story so many times before.

We confess

we have allowed the most important event in history to be dulled by familiarity.

Help us in this act of worship to recapture a sense of wonder.

Let us discover with surprise the stupendous fact

that the Creator of the universe has shown himself in a new born baby.

Enable us to accept what we shall never fully understand.

So may our worship be filled with spontaneous joy.

J.D. Searle

TOY COLLECTION

As in previous years, you are invited to leave gifts under the tree in the church in support of the annual Prahran Mission Toy Appeal. This should be done by Sunday, December 6th, after which items will be taken to the Mission for distribution prior to Christmas Day.

Reflections on a life in the Faith and Ministry

Margaret Black



We have been delighted to welcome Margaret from the Brighleigh Uniting Church, which sadly closed as a result of Uniting our Future. We are not without some experience about this process! Fortunately Armadale has survived, and we look forward with hope. Here is Margaret's story:

"I was born in 1933 at Coldstream, Victoria – the 4th of 7 daughters. My father was a Clydesdale horse breeder and stone quarry owner but he died when we were all quite young. My grandparents Robert Black and his wife were early settlers to the Lilydale area and helped establish the Lilydale Presbyterian Church in which I was baptised and confirmed. After attending Lilydale Higher Elementary School I worked as a reception/typist for 10 years before training at Rolland House, the Presbyterian Deaconess and Missionary Training College between 1958-1960.

In 1961 I was commissioned a Deaconess of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria at Lilydale and worked in the Reservoir & Huntingdale parishes before my marriage to the Rev. Bill Johnston in 1963 during his Exit appointment to the Branhholme parish in the Western District. Three of our five children were born there, and two more were born at Flemington which, in 1967 was Bill's next appointment.

The Flemington Church was burned down by a firebug in 1970, and our life changed radically as

well. Bill moved to become a minister-in-secular-employment, working in the Postmaster-General's Department (PMG). He retired early at age 45 through ill health, and went on to become a professional actor.

I took up further theological studies, between 1983 and 1990, and earned my Bachelor of Theology degree as a means of retraining for Deaconess ministry and at the same time did Supply ministry in the Maroondah Presbytery after I was reinstated as a Deaconess of the Uniting Church in Australia.

At the age of 58 I was appointed full-time to the Horsham Parish in the Wimmera with a membership of 1000 where my ministry consisted of Chaplain to the Wimmera Base Hospital and Holy Communion to the nursing homes as well as visiting the elderly and conducting worship in the outstations. I also conducted a huge number of funerals.

On 7 February 1993 with a number of other Deaconesses I became an accredited Deacon of the Uniting Church in Australia which changed the focus of Diaconal ministry in the Uniting Church.

After I left Horsham in 1995 Bill Johnston and I separated and I worked as a part-time minister at Dandenong North where in 1997 I retired and moved to Coronet Bay in Westernport to live. I took an active role in Presbytery at this time working on the student committee and as a Presbytery Liaison Person.

In 2000 I moved to Wonthaggi to live and joined the Cowes Congregation on Phillip Island. I also worked extensively in Supply ministry in East Gippsland over a number of years until in 2006 when I moved back to Melbourne to be nearer my children and grandchildren.

I settled in Lilydale and rejoined my home church where I was involved in leading worship, pastoral care, and briefly as minister in association until April 2011 when I celebrated 50 years in ministry and in my late 70's retired once more, and moved to North Caulfield to live.

I have had a rich and rewarding professional life over the last 30 odd years.

In spite of my marriage breakup 20 years

ago, and I have developed many lasting friendships over the years.

My last parish association was Brighleigh congregation which disbanded reluctantly in December 2014. I joined Armadale congregation earlier this year when I decided to give up driving.

Thank you all for welcoming me so warmly to the Armadale congregation. I had no idea how my life would change when I came to Armadale. There I met Karel, with whom, in a very short time, a life-partnership has been established. Miracles still happen, as do life-changing experiences. Thank you all for sharing our joy."

Advent/Christmas/January services

Services are at 9.30 each Sunday until Christmas, except as follows —

Advent Sunday, 29 November: Combined service at Stonnington UC Community Church (Ewing), at 10.15 am. No service at Armadale.

Christmas Eve, 24 December: Lessons and Carols, Rev Gerrit Peterschlingman, at 7 pm.

Christmas Day: Combined service at Stonnington UC Community Church (Ewing) at 9.30 am (no service at Armadale).

27 December to 31 January 2016: We will be combining with the other Uniting Churches in Stonnington for these services. Details are being finalised, so please see the website for details.

From February until April next year, supply will be provided by Rev Gillian Crozier.

Communion with God through prayer is fundamental to Christian growth. It is through prayer that we form a personal relationship with God. Like anything in life, this relationship must be nurtured and fed for it to grow.

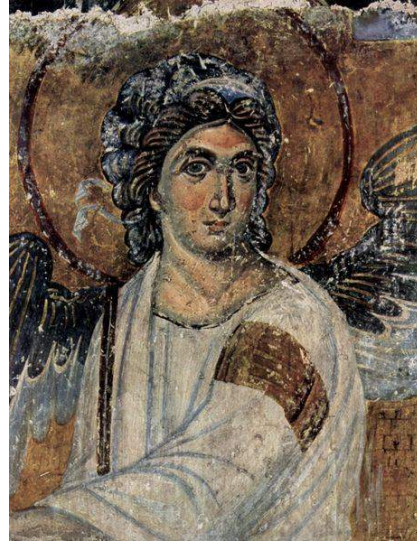
Uniting Church, Synod of NSW & ACT

Gabriel

I don't know your precise job description
though I know that part of it is announcing
good news. Assaulted by daily horrors we
could surely do with more of it down here.
Was it you who started the old cliché *Look
for the silver lining* which turned into song?
So not your words then, but when you did
speak, the young girl was truly astonished.

Taking your advice, I find solace in clouds.
On this November day, the breeze attempts
to herd them over azure pasture. My head
lifts upwards. Beyond the shadow of your
spread wings lies the shimmering light of
of summer, and the One who imagined us.

WR



While the poem above gets its inspiration from the visit of Archangel Gabriel to Mary before the birth of Jesus, the image is of the White Angel, which forms part of the fresco in the monastery church of Mileseva, Serbia, and dates from 1235. The fresco depicts the Myrrh-bearing women discovering Christ's empty tomb. An angel clothed in white, understood by the church to be Archangel Gabriel, points to the grave-clothes and proclaims to the frightened women the good news of: *"...you seek Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said."* (Matt 28: 5-6) .

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL APPEAL

The Christmas Bowl Appeal is a cherished tradition among the Australian family of churches. Every year more than 2000 churches from 19 denominations come together to help the world most vulnerable.

The appeal had its genesis on Christmas Day 1949 when the Rev. Frank Byatt, a Methodist minister and ecumenist, placed a simple empty bowl on the table. He humbly asked his friends and family to contribute to what they felt the cost of what they had eaten had been. He asked them to consider their own good fortune in being able to share in a Christmas meal in comfort and safety.

The Christmas Bowl Appeal is our way of forging a loving connection between the community here in Australia and people around the world experiencing dreadful hardship and suffering. From that small beginning nearly \$2.5 million dollars is now raised annually. Armadale Uniting Church has participated in the project for many years, and will do so again this year.

Armada people

Rev Joan Wright led us in worship on 18 October (right).



It's been good to see Pat Tolson (left)

Ian and Krystyna Thomas met up with Rob and Ann Ahin for dinner — in Barcelona!



There is no use trying to be more spiritual than God. God never meant man to be a purely spiritual creature. That is why He uses material things like bread and wine to put the new life into us. We may think this rather crude and unspiritual. God does not. He invented eating. He likes matter. He invented it.

C.S. Lewis

An Inspiring Pilgrimage

Rev Peter Beale



Peter at Salisbury Cathedral

In October last year, as my time with the Armadale Congregation was coming to a close, I wrote an article for *The Mustard Seed*. The theme of the Advent issue last year was “pilgrimage” and my article was about the concept of pilgrimage and how I yearned to make a pilgrimage back to the place of my birth, and to many places that I hold as sacred to me. Now that I am back from my Long Service Leave, I am reflecting on the article, and my journey, and whether I still agree with what I wrote just 9 months ago. I wrote:

What do we think of when we hear that someone is going on a pilgrimage? For me, a pilgrimage is not just a holiday away from home, or a tour of some new location we have never been to before, but a journey of deep meaning and significance that has some lasting purpose for our lives.

I finished the article by proposing that when we go on pilgrimage we often come away from it changed, and I suggested that the folk of Armadale, who are often away on holidays, consider taking a pilgrimage to their sacred sites, and allow those places to change them, if they dare. So how was my journey? Was it a pilgrimage—did I go to all the places I wanted to, and take the time to let them change me? Or was it little more than a holiday?

Iona Abbey



One of the realities of taking a trip of seven weeks on your own is that you are left to your own resources, and you have to make all the decisions about when and where you go. This could have been quite a burden, but for me it was amazingly freeing. In my first three days in England I saw the memorial plaque to John Wesley's "heart-warming" moment at the entrance to the London Museum in Aldersgate Street, I spent hours at St Paul's Cathedral and stayed for Evensong, I visited the Westminster Cathedral (Roman Catholic) and stayed for Vespers led by the joint Abbey and Cathedral choirs, and I sat and contemplated the ancient history of Old Sarum, near Salisbury. These experiences set the tone for the rest of my journey. Over the following weeks I would visit cathedrals and churches in Glasgow, Edinburgh, St Andrews (ruins), Fort George (near Inverness), Dunblane, Durham, York, Coventry (ruins), Oxford, and finally Salisbury, before spending two weeks on the continent. In the middle of all that I spent a week on Iona, visiting the Abbey usually twice a day for worship. I also made the time to visit most of my uncles, aunts and cousins, and those places where I grew up, and to take a few days here and there to just rest, reflect, do washing, and prepare for what was still to come. In my final two weeks I visited Rome, Florence, Munich, Berlin and Paris, and in each of those cities I visited the main sacred sites, as well as places of art and history. Being self-directed, there were so many places I missed seeing because I would rather see a place in detail, sit and absorb its age and beauty, and contemplate the sacrifice of scores of generations of people who built and worshipped in those opulent medieval cathedrals, and still do today.

As I consider what I wrote last year, I can say that I did indeed achieve an inspiring pilgrimage to almost all the places I mentioned, and many others besides. I also documented my journey with over 6500 photographs! Did the journey change me? Certainly. This time of long service leave was much more than a pleasure trip: it was a voyage of self-discovery; it was an exploration of the deep roots of Christianity in the UK and the major cities of Europe; it was a time of experiencing a long age of history around every corner, and in almost every building I entered; it was a pilgrimage to the sacred, and this sacredness was found in places of worship, of violence, of beauty, of ruin, of family origin and rest, and in experiences with my long separated family members, reunited after 31 years. With all of this I could not help but be affected by it, and I will doubtless be reflecting on just how it has changed me for years to come. So I am pleased to finish with the same words with which I concluded the Armadale article: as Christians we are all pilgrims, journeying towards the sacred, so, when you next go on a journey, consider it a pilgrimage, rather than a tour; look for the sacred, take your time to dwell on it, and let it change your life.



Plaque, in busy
Aldersgate St.

PRIMITIVE PHYSIC:

John Wesley on Diet and Exercise

From a booklet at Wesley's Chapel, London

First published in the 1740's, John Wesley's book *Primitive Physic*, contains health and wellness advice, at least some of which makes surprisingly good sense today. Wesley offered the people of his day both an overall preventative approach to health and a long list of remedies for specific ailments – in all more than 800 prescriptions for more than 300 different disorders. The following are a few of his suggestions:

ON DIET

The great rule of eating and drinking is to suit the quality and quantity of the food to the strength of our digestion: to take always such a sort and such a measure of food as sits light and easy to the stomach.

Nothing conduces more to health than abstinence and plain food, with due labour.

For studious persons, about eight ounces of animal food, and twelve of vegetables, in 24 hours is sufficient.

Water is the wholesomest of all drinks; it quickens the appetite, and strengthens the digestion most.

Strong, and more especially spirituous liquors are a certain, though slow, poison.

Malt liquors (except clear small beer, or small ale) are very hurtful to tender persons.

Coffee and tea are extremely hurtful to persons who have weak nerves.

Tender persons should eat very light suppers, and that 2-3 hours before going to bed.

ON EXERCISE

A due degree of exercise is indispensably necessary to health and long life.

Walking is the best exercise for those able to bear it; riding for those who are not.

The open air, when the weather is fair, contributes much to the benefit of exercise.

We may strengthen any weak part of the body by constant exercise. Thus, the lungs may be strengthened by loud speaking, or by walking up an easy ascent; the digestion and the nerves by riding; the arms and hams, by rubbing them strongly daily.

Those who read and write much should learn to do it standing; otherwise it will impair their health.

The fewer clothes anyone uses, by day or night, the harder he will be.

John Wesley statue, Wesley Church, Lonsdale Street (right)



ALL SAINTS' DAY



Fiona's period of supply ended on All Saints' Day (1 November) and we marked the occasion with a presentation at morning tea (above and below).



Offerings

We're grateful for the level of support that we receive through weekly offerings, but have you thought about the amount you contribute? If it hasn't increased for a while, perhaps you might like to consider whether a little increase might be in order. Or, if you don't use the envelopes at present, could you consider asking Betty T for a set? It would be greatly appreciated, if you do use the envelopes, if you could use them each week, even if you can't attend any particular week, as this assists the Council in budgeting.

Mental Health Week

We held a community morning tea, in conjunction with Prahran Mission, to mark Mental Health Week.

Here are a couple of pictures, thanks to Rob Ahin



Contemplative Worship at Armadale

This group meets in the church lobby on the 2nd and 4th Sundays at 7 p.m. It is based on Ignation meditative practice. For further information contact John Adamson 0400 168 714 .

St Andrew's, Gardiner

Sadly, the St Andrew's Gardiner congregation has taken the decision to close down after Easter 2016. We Armadale folk have worshipped with them and enjoyed their company on many occasions over the years. This must be a painful time for all their members, especially those with a long association with such a beautiful building. Please remember them in your prayers.



We were pleased to have a joint service at Gardiner on 14 November.

Gardiner presented the "dividends" from their Environmental Project to Prahran Mission and to the Korean Congregation of Melbourne (for use in a sanatorium in North Korea).



Armadale Uniting Church,
86A Kooyong Road,
ARMADALE Vic 3143

Minister: armadaleuc@bigpond.com

Organist: Rowan Kidd
www.armadale.unitingchurch.org.au

Regular service times (except January): 9.30 am each Sunday.

Children's program: 4th Sunday of the month, during term time.

During January, and occasionally at other times, we hold combined services with the other Stonington region Churches, instead of meeting at Armadale.