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# VISION



Advent Edition December 2011  
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## FROM THE MINISTER'S DESK

### ADVENT



Since St Stephen's and St Mary's are almost city church neighbours and Advent traditionally is the season of friendship, it might be a good idea to meditate on the meaning of Mary – for Protestants.

And perhaps the best one to learn about “Mary for Protestants” is Martin Luther. He loved the Christmas story and often imagined himself there among the biblical characters, one of them, full of wonder and amazement about the events which culminated in Jesus' birth. More than anything, he seems to be fascinated by the persons around Jesus and the way they responded to the news of his birth. Take Joseph: What did he really think of Mary's story after her visit to her cousin? Luther puts himself in the shoes of the shepherds as they responded in fear to the appearance of the angel.

He wonders about the angels and their song. But most of all he seems to be fascinated by Mary – in sermon after sermon he talks about her. Can you even imagine yourself in her shoes? Imagine what she must have been thinking. And yet, in spite of everything, she believed. She accepted whatever God brought upon her. She received God and God's calling in spite of everything. That, Luther said, is **faith**.

Therefore, according to him, in comparison to her, the characters in the story we come closest to, would be the ox and the donkey.

Although it is true that Luther opposed what he called Catholic exaggerations about Mary, he had a huge appreciation for her. She was to him a sign and a witness to God's grace and the first one to receive and exult in Christ the Saviour. Because she had been chosen by God to be the mother of Christ, she becomes in a sense, the mother of all those who are united to Christ by faith.

Hence, we can see Mary's role concerns which is always linked with the advent of faith. Traditionally, Advent is the time when the Protestant churches reminded themselves of this. In this sense, Mary reminds us that the time ahead of us is not so much the time of Christmas, but the time of Christ. And the way to respond to this time is by receiving Christ, honouring Christ, through faith.

Mary, faith and advent: these three belong together.

Luther put it like this: “Whoever possesses a good (firm) faith, says the Hail Mary without danger! Whoever is weak in faith can utter no Hail Mary without danger to his salvation.” (Sermon, March 11, 1523)... “.He who has no faith is advised to refrain from saying the Hail Mary.” (Personal Prayer Book, 1522).

Mary comes to us as the choice and the gift of God. In recognizing and honouring her, we honour the Lord who has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servants – all his servants. (Luke 1:48) But more than that, in recognizing her role, we recognize the crucial role of the most important gift of this time: **the gift of faith**.

## EDITORIAL

This advent edition takes in the Christmas/New year period, and to the end of Summer to reflect a new beginning of hope and resolutions.

We remember very dear members who are no longer with us who have commenced a new beginning.

We welcome new members of the choir and new membership in the congregation.

Why not make a New Year's resolution to contribute comments, letters, news, jokes, pictures, etc? We need fresh ideas.

Thanking those who have contributed to *Vision*, and wishing all our readers a blessed Christmas.

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

### December 2011

- 2<sup>nd</sup> –Friday Music: Alicia Crossley (recorder)  
7<sup>th</sup> – Fellowship Christmas Party. Entertainment  
Arranged by Ruth Lockley  
9<sup>th</sup> - Friday Music: Raisa Dobrinsky (piano)  
Gregory Elmologio (cello)  
18<sup>th</sup> 10.00 : Service of Nine Lessons & Carols  
with choir, organ, brass, harp.  
24<sup>th</sup> - 11pm: Christmas Eve Lessons & Carols  
25<sup>th</sup> 10am- Christmas Day Worship

### January 2012

No Friday Music Recitals or Sunday lunches

- 1<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Day service of Holy Communion  
22<sup>nd</sup> – Morning worship with extracts from *Messiah*  
By the Combined Churches Choir  
26<sup>th</sup> – Australia Day Activities and concerts.

### February 2012

- 3<sup>rd</sup> - Friday Music: Oskar de Mari-Jones (classical guitar)  
10<sup>th</sup> – Yong Yang (violin)  
17<sup>th</sup> – Raisa Dobrinsky(piano); Gregory Emaloglou(cello)  
24<sup>th</sup>- Alistair Nelson (organ)

## **Joseph's Lullaby**

Sleep now, little one.  
I will watch while you and your mother sleep.  
I wish I could do more.  
This straw is not enough for you.  
Back in Nazareth I'll make a proper bed for you  
Of seasoned wood, smooth, strong, well-pegged.  
A bed fit for a carpenter's son.

Just wait till we get back to Nazareth.  
I'll teach you everything I know.  
You'll learn to use the cedarwood, eucalyptus, fir.  
You'll learn to use the drawshave, axe, and saw.  
Your arms will grow strong, your hands rough –  
like these.  
You will bare the pungent smell of new wood  
And wear shavings and saw dust in your hair.

You'll be a man whose life centres  
On hammer and nails and wood.  
But for now,  
Sleep, little Jesus, sleep.

*Ron Klug – 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Poet*

**Faith** is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark.

*Rabindranath Tagore*



*Illustrated by Marion Welch*

**DID YOU KNOW** that

**Advent** begins on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday before Christmas Day or on the Sunday nearest to 30<sup>th</sup> November?

The primary sanctuary colour is purple for the coming of the **King**?  
It is also the colour of penitence and fasting in preparation for the King?

During Advent Christians also anticipate the **Second Coming as a twin theme** of the season?

The Christmas wreath symbolizes eternity, and endless mercy which has no beginning or end.?

**Epiphany** is Revelation/ Manifestation?

In Hispanic and other European cultures Epiphany is known as ‘Three Kings’ Day. In Spanish: El día de los Tres Reyes (‘Three Kings’ Day); In Dutch: Driekonigendag.

Some cultures celebrate with the baking of a special king’s cake?

The symbol, + C (Caspar) + B (Balthazar) + M (Melchior) with 2 numbers before and after, for example, 20+C+B+M+12 is sometimes written over the doorway of a Christian home. Translated in Latin : *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* – May Christ bless this house.

The act of worship by the **magi** corresponds to Simeon’s blessing that this child, Jesus would be a light for revelation to the **gentiles** – the first indication that Jesus came for **all** people, **all** nations, **all** races, and that God would not be **limited to only a few**?

Red and green are secular colours of Christmas symbolic of the evergreens and the holly of the **northern** hemisphere?

E.B.White

#### Readers’ contributions

The word “Advent” takes me right back to my childhood. An important part of Christmas was my Advent calendar. On the 1<sup>st</sup> December each year I would open the “windows”, one for each day leading up to Christmas Day. Behind each window was an appealing image linked to the Christmas traditions. I eagerly anticipated the delights of our family Christmas. Sad to say, once I entered my teens the Advent calendar lost its appeal.

The lighting of the Advent candles in the worship services can help us all recapture the sense of excitement and wonder which we have all felt in the past.

#### Cradle, Cross, Crown

Santa Claus, Christmas trees and nativity scenes will be common sights this month.

Yet Jesus is the One we must seek and celebrate. Let’s bow before the **Son of God** in the cradle, **the Saviour** on the cross and **the King** on the throne.

I can still hear my grandmother telling me, ‘It is Advent, dear, be careful’.

Advent for us meant the return of the watermelons and snakes!

I grew up in a tiny bush town with a one-teacher school. A dairy farmer who specialized in growing watermelons brought a lot to church to be eaten after the service. The watermelon season brought out the snakes out of hibernation.

Dear St.Stephen’s,

I appreciate “Vision” and continue a contribution towards your sending it to me. I certainly miss the church and you all. Blessings to you all and your continuing faith service and music programmes.

Josephine Quinn

I want to tell you how well “Vision” was done. I enjoyed the minister’s message. The layout is excellent; the obituaries well written and moving. I enjoyed Richard’s excellent photos and Marion’s lovely cartoon.

Well done! I am receiving loving care and attention here and feel very lucky.

Eve Wurth

## View from the Organ Bench



The end of the year is a very busy time for all church musicians and this year will be no exception. November is a busy time too with the end of the 'Sundays in ordinary time' as the book of common prayer calls them and the special Sundays for Reformation, All Saints, Remembrance, Christ the King, Kirking of the Tartans, Advent and finally, Christmas, following in quick succession.

All these special Sundays have their own special musical repertoire and it is great to be able to have a choir large enough now to start learning and singing some of this repertoire. Two new young basses have joined our ranks, Brad Gilchrist from Perth and Gavin Heise from Newcastle. Both have studied music and are confident 'readers' which helps us tremendously. We are still happy to have more singers in the choir, particularly in the Alto part where we still have the same two Altos we have had for several years. One of them, Ruth, is seriously considering giving up using garlic scented deodorant!

For Christmas this year, the choir is busy preparing some lovely carols, all of which have been sung at Kings College, Cambridge. Our 'Nine Lessons and Carols' service will be held on Sunday morning 18<sup>th</sup> December and will feature our brass quintet, harp, organ and choir. Please invite all your friends along. The church should be full. As we trialled last year, following the overwhelming success, we will be presenting a reduced form of 'Lessons and Carols' service for Christmas eve at 11pm. This will contain music and readings from the previous Sunday along with the brass, harp, organ and choir. Christmas day will have lots of music with a choir and organ. Please invite all your friends to all of these services (and why not invite them to come EVERY SUNDAY as well?!). If everyone invited one friend each Sunday the size of our congregation would double! After Christmas the choir will have its well earned break and return at the end of January. On 22<sup>nd</sup> January we will have the 'Messiah Choir' visiting us once again and then, we will be preparing for the Easter period.

The 2012 Friday Music program is completely booked up with a waiting list of players wanting to play, should someone have to pull out. Please come along to these marvellous concerts and bring your friends. We often have more people attending these concerts than those attending our Sunday services, yet so few people are from St. Stephen's. We need our members there to befriend those who attend and to encourage them to return on Sundays.

*Mark Quarmby - Director of Music*



## A Guide to the SATB Choir

In any choir there are four voice parts: soprano, alto, tenor, and bass. Each part sings in a different range, prompting jokes.

**The sopranos** are the ones who sing the highest, and because of this they consider themselves insulted if they are not allowed to go at least to a high F in every movement of any given piece. Their attitude to other parts:

**Altos:** are boring and are not really necessary.

**Tenors:** are nice to have around. Sops like to sing duets with tenors. It is romantic.

**Basses:** are the scum of the earth. They sing too loud and there has to be something wrong with anyone who sings in the F clef, anyway.

*(More info from the D o M in the next issue)*

## Traveller's Tale

### Gorilla Trekking in Uganda

In August this year, I flew to Uganda to join 3 fellow trekkers from England, Ken, the driver and Heather, the leader of the trek to see the endangered mountain gorillas.

One very important directive from the organizers was, do not wear green clothing. That could be considered military origin.

On the way through the vast area we covered I experienced many unusual sights, too many to include all in this report. My focus is the trek.



After crossing the equator, marked only by a restaurant, we arrived in Lake Mbuho National Park where we saw Ankole cattle. Their distinguishing features are their monstrous horns on either side of their heads and their rusty-yellow colour. Their ancestry is traced to Eurasia as early as 15,000 BC. We saw all sorts of exotic animals and birds too.

On the next day, the dusty roads turned into pot-holed tracks walled on either side by banana plantations. On the way to the Bwindi Inpenetrable National Park by Lake Kitandara we visited a community where banana gin and beer were brewed and the witch doctor concocted his brews with an assortment of herbs. At the Batwa (pigmy) school the children sang and danced for us so rhythmically. We also visited their hospital. There's no medical funding. Therefore, hospitals rely on donations and doctors from distant countries. The HIV/AIDS clinic serves as a church on Sundays. I left a donation, and you would have thought that I had bought the hospital!

One of the largest and richest ecosystems in Africa is a habitat for many animal and plant species which is also the home of the endangered mountain gorillas. After travelling for 2 pre-dawn hours through the forest, we arrived at the village of Ruhija. Our guide issued us with the following information about the gorillas:

There are 6 family groups in this forest. We were going to trek to find the Oruzogo Group. Only 8 people per day are allowed in the area. All must wear long pants tucked into long socks, and long-sleeved tops to prevent the safari ants from biting. All must be free of colds and coughs and any ailment so that no infection is transferred to the animals. The rangers will go ahead in search of the family and we were warned that we might not spot the animals. If we did, we must be very quiet. No flash photography, mobile phones or raised voices. Never go closer than 7m. Our time allowed there, only 1 hour

The monsoon rain had descended the night before; the tracks were extremely mossy and slippery. We needed walking poles. This necessitated the hire of porters. Mine was as slim as a reed, about 4ft tall and weighed nothing, but he held my hand.

After 21/2 hrs through overgrown vines, creepers, under and over logs, we were notified that we were approaching the family comprising a dominant Silverback which was searching for ants; 2 Blackbacks, 2 adult females one of which was suckling her infant while endeavouring to tame 3 unruly young ones whilst others were hooting, feeding, swinging in the trees. The adult males weigh about 200kg and the females, a little less. I was totally mesmerized by this scene. The trek alone cost approximately \$A600. That money finances the porters, rangers, guides and the community.

After our allocated 1 hour we journeyed north to the Queen Elizabeth National Park and witnessed the movement of a variety of animals.

We stayed at Hippo Hill, an established camp site. We clambered down Kyambura gorge, thick with tree top canopies and vines dangling to the floor to see the home of the chimpanzees. We crossed a river on a barge made of old petrol drums bound with wire. But there were no chimps.



On the last day we travelled through the Rwenzori mountains, the border between Uganda and Democratic Republic of Congo. The air was sharp with the smell of the pine forest and coffee.

When I returned to Australia folk asked me did I feel safe in Uganda. Yes, I felt quite safe as I was not wearing green!

## Annual General Meeting Report

The AGM of St. Stephen's was held on Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2011 and it was pleasing to see a good attendance at this important event.

The principal item of interest was a motion recommending that the congregation issue a Call to the Rev. Dr Ockert Meyer to become the minister of the Word at St. Stephen's .

Members were made aware that should Dr Meyer accept the appointment, the current arrangement would continue, namely, that he would be present in Sydney from Sunday through to Wednesday. The Presbytery Chairman, the Rev. Neil Ericksson, outlined how this schedule satisfied church guidelines. This was followed by discussion of the proposed arrangement. Members acknowledged Dr Meyer's service to date, and were particularly appreciative of his sermons and his personal engagement with the Congregation.

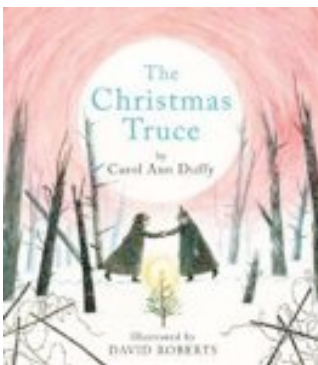
Various organizations of the church presented annual reports. The church's financial statements for the year ending 30 June 2011 were adopted. Expenditure of \$576,859 on repairs to the stone work of the church has resulted in a deficit of \$412,567. The budget for the forthcoming year provides for lower building repair costs.

from *Bill Roberts – Chairman of the Congregation*

## BOOK REVIEW

*The Christmas Truce*, begins:

Christmas Eve in the trenches of France,  
the guns were quiet.  
The dead lay still in No Man's Land -  
Freddie, Franz, Friedrich, Frank...  
The moon, like a medal, hung in the clear, cold sky ...



Carol Ann Duffy – Scottish poet and playwright.  
Professor of Contemporary Poetry at  
Manchester University.  
Current British Poet Laureate

This little book, charmingly illustrated, is the Poet Laureate's account of the moment that 'peace found a place in 'No Man's Land' in World War I.

The firing stopped, the carols began and the men played football.

Most of you know how the narrative ends, and how the German carol, *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht* was introduced to the English speaking world.

**Congratulations** to Richard and Kylie Harding on the birth of Their first born – **William Geoffrey Sutherland** on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

The Hardings live in Sutherland but attend St.Stephen's when they can.

Our best wishes and blessings to the family.



**Sleeps like a baby !**

**Congratulations** also to the Fellowship and Handcraft Group on a very successful Street Stall, despite the very wet and cold weather, making a total of \$1,527. 80.

The Group would like to thank all who helped by making and donating goods for the stall and by helping on the stall and giving their support.

Very special acknowledgement is made to Pam Fisher for her exquisite baby garments; to Geoff Allan for his plants and to Rosalie Newton for the lovely christening robes.



