



Look again at that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us. On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there--on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam. (Carl Sagan 1994)

Hospitality at the Centre

Breakfast time at the St Kilda Drop In is a fairly subdued affair. The doors open at 9 and people wander in quietly and slowly at different times and put together their own personal 'brand' of breakfast – cereals, or toast with vegemite and jam on the same slice. And the morning begins just like most other mornings. The pool table is in use very quickly while others make their coffee and go outside. A couple of people sit down to watch television in the lounge area. The morning passes.

Lunch-time at the Drop In is quite different; it can be a chaotic experience. There are a few systems in place to produce some orderly access to the food counter but in the main it's a period of movement and noise; chattering around tables and the clinking of cutlery on plates and dishes, and the scraping of chairs on the floor. There's usually a lot of concentration and quite rapid consumption by some people – there might be seconds.

Some people come in just before lunch. Eat their food and go again. Others have been there all morning and will stay until closing time, either being involved in different activities or watching the TV, while others sit outside with their mugs of coffee and smoke their cigarettes.

Some sit there quietly. Some engage in banter. Some have serious conversations about what's going on in the world. One or two are there just trying to bot a smoke. Some are very protective of their supplies while others are quite generous.

There's also a lot of gentle and barely visible acts of care and support.

Staff and volunteers are always 'hovering' – observing and listening, and ready to become involved if necessary. In essence, the 'community' revolves around the principle of hospitality. Strangers are welcomed. Meals are made with care and imagination depending upon what is available on the day. 'Guests' are fed and refreshed. Every effort is made to create a safe and thoughtful space for a community of people who have a huge spectrum of needs and issues, and who get on with each other really well - most of the time.

What a gift this place is to the community of St Kilda.

Shalom - David

The Womb of Life (Tune: O Store Gud)

The road is long but there is time to ponder
To think about what life on earth might mean.
This pale blue dot, suspended in a sunbeam
One mote of dust, within a cosmic stream.

Refrain:

*This is our world, our place among the stars
A long long way, from Moons and Mars
And this is home to everything that lives.
The womb of life, that gives and gives.*

The roads of faith, are born of myth and story
Woven from life and many human dreams.
They speak of love and hope that knows no ending,
Of mysteries some science now explains.

Refrain:

Yet faith remains a way of comprehending
Of seeing life through thoughtful caring eyes
Of seeking truth within the ancient stories
And finding hope through science and the wise.

Refrain:

(David Pargeter 24 March 2018)