

BULLETIN

Welcome to the Bulletin

From David: Longing

If our encounter with a Coronavirus and an exhausting period of lockdown has taught us anything, it would have to be what it feels like to sit with a deep longing and learning how to patiently and sometimes impatiently wait for it to be satisfied. A longing to see and hug family. A longing to travel beyond 5km. A longing to sit down in a café and have a cup of coffee. A longing to go for a walk without wearing a mask. The list goes on. **This particular experience of longing is steadily drawing to a close.**

It is the season of Advent, and one of Christianity's much loved Advent hymns begins with 'Come thou long-expected Jesus'. Charles Wesley wrote that hymn in 1744. He had been reading Haggai 2:7 and contrasted that reading with the appalling circumstances of orphaned children in his part of the world. Poverty was rife in the 18th Century. This hymn emerged out of Wesley's prayers.

I understand that theologically and spiritually 'Come thou long-expected Jesus', meant and means different things to different people, and that all sorts of messianic hopes were being entertained before and during Jesus's lifetime. But by drawing upon our recent COVID experience, try to imagine what it must have been like to spend your whole lifetime longing for something. Not just for a few months. Longing for something or someone to interrupt a way of living that had become oppressive, toxic and hopeless.

That was life under Roman occupation and corrupt civic/religious institutional governance. But ordinary folk, raised on faith stories that nourished hope in a God who would somehow step-in on their behalf, kept watching and waiting for some sign that this kind of existence might come to an end – and soon!

I suspect that many of us, regardless of our 'theological position', have found ourselves longing for some kind of 'divinely initiated interruption' either for something very personal like healing from cancer, or an end to some violent domestic situation, or for some national or international circumstance eg. like an end to the conflict in Syria. The list goes on.

And when that longing is not satisfied, it's natural to conclude that 'interruption' is not going to happen and that we need to dig even deeper into reserves of patience, courage and perseverance – and hope. So is it any wonder that when we catch a glimpse of something that sounds and looks like hope, we hold on to it.

The Gospels tried to capture the hope for change that Jesus brought and brings to life and faith. The writers did this by crafting birth scenarios to tell a profound story, and to illustrate that when heroic faithfulness and fearless action come together, things change. Interruption takes place. And because such events seem to

happen rarely, then the writers concluded that it must be the consequence of a special divine initiative. But the thing is, every life can be described as a divine initiative – born of the mystery of existence.

So, when we sing ‘Come thou long-expected Jesus’, let’s remember that it’s not so much a longing that Jesus himself will come amongst us again, but that when we see signs of a faith like his, then God as spirit has indeed interrupted the pattern of things – again. Human agency and courageous faith can change the world.

Shalom. David

David will lead our **CHURCH GATHERING** this **SUNDAY** in the garden of the Engagement Hub. **From David:** We will also be decorating a Christmas tree - **BUT**, decorating it with some things that **YOU** bring as a decoration – something small enough to hang from the tree (a card, a shape, a small item etc, or something to put beneath the tree). **And here’s the catch** – it needs to be something that satisfies one or both of the following:

1. Something that symbolises your personal hope for 2021
2. Something that illustrates what 2020 has meant for you

PS. It will be very summery so you might also like to bring an umbrella or a hat !

BIBLE READINGS: Isaiah 61: 1 – 4, 8 – 11. John 1: 6 – 8, 19 - 28

This is the third Sunday in the Christian season of Advent - a period of preparation and anticipation for Christmas Day – we light the candle today for **JOY**.

FINAL BIBLE STUDY FOR THIS YEAR (via ZOOM). This Wednesday 16th December

David will focus on ‘Caroling’. 7.30 to 8.30pm. **ALL WELCOME !**

CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE will be held either in the church or in the garden of the Engagement Hub on **SUNDAY DECEMBER 20TH AT 6.30PM**. This will be an evening of music, song, story and celebration of a faith that was made wonderfully authentic in Jesus of Nazareth. Come along and celebrate the end of a very profound year

CHRISTMAS DAY Service will be held either in the church building or in the garden of the Engagement Hub at 9.30 am.

Robert Hoskin will be taking the service on Sunday 27th December.

For all attendances, please ensure that you write your name and contact details in the book provided, that you use the hand sanitizer and that you adhere to physical distancing guidelines.

As much as we’d love to see you, please don’t attend if you feel UNWELL.

We can now provide tea and coffee! There will be someone rostered on to do this.

You could bring your own cup if you want to.

Roma would be happy to talk to anyone who would like to be put on the roster over Jan/Feb.



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CHRISTMAS BOWL. This year we encourage you to give to the Christmas Bowl on-line <https://christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au> If you would prefer to use a donation envelope please contact Mary; brimary@iprimus.com.au

The December edition of **CROSSLIGHT** is available online <https://victas.uca.org.au>. There are hard copies available at the church.

For up-to-date information on our Port Phillip East Presbytery and to download the December edition of **NEWSBEAT** www.ucappep.org.

Please visit our website: www.stkildaunitingchurch.org.au It is updated on a regular basis by Petra. If you would like to make a contribution to support the work of the church, the best way is through bank transfer: 013 427. Acct 3108 34465. The only identification needed is ' offering' . By mail: PO Box 385, Balaclava 3183

Contributions to these bulletins welcomed – please send to desleighk@ozemail.com.au

VISION STATEMENT. As a community of faith, the St Kilda Uniting Church strives to do what is just, to show constant love and to walk humbly with God.

As we gather in our various places via Zoom, we acknowledge the *Yaluk-ut Weelam Clan of the Boon Wurrung People* as the traditional custodians of this land on which our church building stands. We give thanks for their commitment to nurturing this land over many generations. We honour the sacred stories that belong to this land. We pay our respect to Elders past, present and for those emerging who will lead their communities into the future. We commit ourselves to empowering children to continue the journey of reconciliation on this land.

IN SEARCH OF THE CHRIST CHILD – Robert Hoskin

I searched for Jesus in the city streets

I thought it would make my Christmas complete

This child of wonder, a sign of great hope

It would give me a lift and a way to cope

With the challenge of life in corona's wake

With shopping and teaching and the well-earned break.

I found Santa with snowflakes, sparkles and signs

Reindeer and trivia, with imported pines.

There were even toy soldiers who stood tall in the square

And a galaxy of stars arranged in the air.

But the child was missing, and cast to the side

Pushed to the edge and left to abide

In locked up churches with no sign of life

With padlocked gates, to add to my strife.

And what of the windows, dressed up for this time

They spoke of this season, at the height of its prime.

I found flying trams, and a multi-cultural array

And even cartoons to brighten my day.

But still no Christ in this Christmas binge

He would remain unloved, alone on the fringe.

Where will I find him, in my city of dreams

He is there in the shadows, and not as it seems

For Christmas is his birthday and he is the guest

His is our hope, and through him we are blessed.

So where will I find him at the end of the day

When he's not in the shops or Santa's sleigh.

I may find in the giving and living in peace

When tolerance is real and the conflicts cease.

He is there in our hearts, to be found in the soul

He is there when it matters with joy to extol.

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Ps. Next Sunday will be the last Bulletin until the end of January. If you would like anything included in this last edition for 2020 please email: desleighk@ozemail.com.au