

Be careful what you pray for

Paddy was driving down the street in a sweat because he had an important meeting and couldn't find a parking spot. Looking up to heaven he said "Lord, take pity on me. If you find me a parking spot I will go to Mass every Sunday for the rest of my life and give up my Irish whiskey!" Miraculously a parking spot appeared. Paddy looked up again and said, "Never mind. I found one."

"The trouble with born-again Christians is that they are an even bigger pain the second time around." – Herb Caen, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 1981

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Saints Alive

Newsletter of All Saints Anglican Church
Northcote
Parish of South Darebin

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David, King of Israel

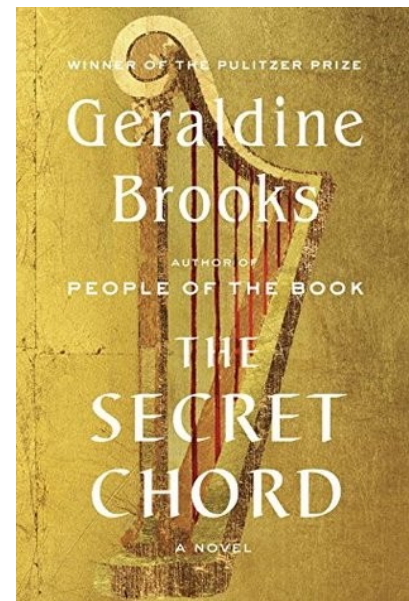
The Venerable Andrew Oddy

Last year, the Pulitzer Prize winning author Geraldine Brooks published her book, *The Secret Chord*. The book attempts in the form of a novel, to present the life and character of David, the great King of Israel.

King David was Israel's second king, and historians date the year of his reign from around 1000 BCE. Prior to King Saul, Israel existed as a confederacy of tribes named after the sons of Israel (formerly called Jacob). This was the beginning of the Iron Age and the existence of Israel is described in the Books of Samuel: "there was no smith in all the land of Israel, for the Philistines said, 'The Hebrews must not make swords or spears for themselves'; so all the Israelites went down to the Philistines to sharpen their plowshares, mattocks, axes or sickles;" (1 Samuel 13:19-22).

Once the Philistine stranglehold had been broken, the way was opened for a period of economic boom and political fortune that enabled Israel to take her place proudly among the nations of the Fertile Crescent. For Israel, the Iron Age proved to be a Golden Age.

The conquest of the Philistines and the establishment of Israel's monarchy are described in the biblical books, 1 and 2 Samuel. The whole idea of kingship was not entirely welcome to Israel and in these books there are a number of speeches attributed to the prophet Samuel that give warning to the people. A king would receive the praise properly due to God, a king would demand burdensome taxes and loyalty and obedience. All of these were unwelcome to the more democratic ideas of the tribal confederacy. One of the prophets, Hosea, living some three hundred years later and following the fall of Samaria, suggests that



Geraldine Brooks *The Secret Chord*, Published by Viking, 2015

kingship was always a mistake: God says, "I gave you a king in my anger and I took him away in my wrath" (Hosea 13: 11).

Nonetheless 1 and 2 Samuel are written to show the establishment of the Davidic line of kings as the result of God's will. The author/s sets out to tell us how Israel came to have a monarchy, an institution which for good and ill was to be part of the people's life from the time of Saul to the time of the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians in 587 BCE. We are shown how the first king, Saul, was a failure, but the future of the monarchy was secured in the person of David. As the story is told, it is David who is the real centre of interest.

The account also shows how the way was prepared for there to be a single central place of worship, at Jerusalem. This is made clear in 2 Samuel, though the real centrality of Jerusalem was only fully established in the seventh century under King Josiah. 1 Samuel opens at the ancient sanctuary of Shiloh; but

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David, King of Israel (cont.)...

“The book achieves a very human picture of King David and is a no-holds-barred depiction of his weaknesses...as well as his great strengths.”

this is doomed, and the situation remains unclear until David captures Jerusalem (2 Sam. 5) and takes there the Ark, the symbol of the God of Israel. Alongside this runs the theme of the priesthood, and again the story is incomplete here. The priesthood of Eli at Shiloh is equally doomed, but it is Samuel who takes over the succession. The priestly line of Eli may be earlier but it is eventually under David that we see the establishment of a new priestly line, that of Zadok in Jerusalem. **Kingship, holy place, priesthood** – three themes which were eventually to be of fundamental importance in Old Testament thought.

All of this is covered in Geraldine Brooks’s work, which I found fascinating as she endeavoured to write in conversational terms and recollections material with which I was familiar only from the biblical account. Because the material is so well known it was sometimes difficult to avoid questioning her interpretation of events. However, I am glad to have read it. The book achieves a very human picture of King David and is a no-holds-barred depiction of his weaknesses and humanity as well as his great strengths. She ventures to describe the way humans experience and describe their encounter with God with great skill.

I read the work very conscious of the impact of ideas of King David on Christian thinking.

The word, *Messiah* means “Anointed One” and refers primarily to the anointed kings of Israel in the Old Testament. It is translated into Greek as “christos” (from which we derive the name of the oil used in baptism, chrism). As the Davidic line of kings ended in the sixth century BCE with the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon, the prophets foretold the appearance of a future Messiah whose rule would be glorious, wise and secure. Jesus acknowledges the title of “Messiah” early in the Gospel of John (4:26) but is reluctant to do so in the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) seemingly because of the “current political implications of the title and the need to prepare the disciples for its fulfilment through the Passion and Resurrection rather than the establishment of a visible Kingdom of God.” However, that is a subject for another article.

I recommend *The Secret Chord* as a very interesting work.

References

1. BW Anderson, *The Living World of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. Longman Press, 1966.
2. Cross, (Ed.) ‘Messiah’, *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, Oxford University Press, 1974.

From the Vestry



Ideas for events that could involve others and reach out to the community? Share your ideas with Georgiana and Arnaud

The All Saints Vestry meets every two months, alternating with the Churchwardens’ meeting. The wardens are also members of the Vestry, so it all goes hand in hand. The Vestry receives a regular report on issues to do with our property—maintenance, security, improvement, tenancy and health and safety issues—and also on our financial position and how our budget is going.

Perhaps the most important work of the Vestry is to think about our community—how we worship, how we welcome others, how we reach out to the people around us, how we can encourage more people into All Saints and make this church their home.

Any issues about worship or community life can be raised with Vestry members (they are

listed on the back of the pew leaflet), and any suggestions for making connections with others are very welcome.

Aside from the Election Day sausage sizzle, which gives us the chance to meet and greet our local neighbours, Georgiana and Arnaud have been developing plans for possible events involving guest speakers or panel discussions on issues that matter to many in the wider community. They would welcome any ideas you have, and any support you can offer.

Vestry meetings are open to all members of the church community; dates and times are listed in the meeting room.

Alma Ryrie-Jones, Secretary

Apprenticed to the sea

Jenifer Watson shares another extract from the writings of her ancestors. Captain Bob recalls the beginning of a life of hardship and adventure at sea.

Melsetter is a large old stone house in the Orkney Islands. It was built in the form of a cross, as it began its history as a monastery. Later it was acquired by our ancestors, some hundreds of years ago. It remained in the family until about 1950. The present owner has shown us through the house and the chapel, which was not part of the monastery, but was built about 1896. This is where Captain Bob was born and grew up.

Apprenticed to the sea
by Captain Bob

On the 4th day of February 1888 we all met in the Aberdeen Shipping Office. I signed the momentous document with my wobbly schoolboy signature. My father, the ship owners, and the witnesses then gravely shook hands. I was not included! I followed my parent out to the street. "Bound apprentice to the sea"! Somehow I didn't feel elated. I who from my earliest years had adored the sea.

That hour in the ship owner's office, where I had seen my father pay the heavy premium for me, and watched the erasure from my indenture papers of every word or clause likely to benefit me had driven some, as yet unidentified, iron into my soul. Bound for four years to obey my masters, heirs or assignees in all things lawful. In exchange I would be fed and taught the business of seamanship. Even to my inexperienced mind there lurked the feeling that someone had made a very good bargain. ... and felt that I had been sold. Sold for four years at nothing apiece. I had chosen the sea however, so alter it I would not.

As we walked along, my father scanned a list supplied by the ship owner, of the outfit required for apprentices joining their vessels. Observing my glum looks he gave me this to read, remarking as we were near the docks, we might buy some of the things there and then:—

*"One double breasted uniform with the company's buttons.
One blue serge ditto.
One midshipman's cap with company badge."*

Immediately my eyes brightened and all gloom fell from me. Pilot cloth uniform and midshipman's cap were so redolent of the rollicking

sea life! Double breasted reefer jacket! Shades of Marryat and Clarke Russel! Oilskins! Sou'wester! Leather belt and green river sheath knife! I had a delicious Deadwood Dick thrill...

The mean streets and the wet cold quayside had vanished. A halo of boyish romance had descended upon me...

I looked down at my tweed knickers and heavy school boots. No more of this for me. School was a thing of the past. A new life had opened up. From shop to shop we went. The uniforms, of course, had to be made to order, but most of the other things we were able to buy. I could hardly contain myself until the carriers arrived with my treasures...

A note came from the ship owner that I was to report to their office at an early date, to meet my fellow apprentices, who were home on leave. Not without misgivings I got through the ordeal. Smart looking lads they were, tanned by tropical suns, and with the free manner of the sea about them.

It was with no small pleasure I noted myself a physical match for any two of them. That, I think, gave me confidence. Eagerly I listened to their yarns of Sydney and Melbourne and South East Trades and "running the Easting down". The call of the sea had me, and I was enthralled...

A sparking April morning, with a brisk breeze blowing, the carrier's van disgorged at the shed door six sleepy boys who had been travelling all night.

Stiffly we blundered through the doors, and then — I held my breath! There in the morning glory she lay! A magnificent full rigged clipper ship, her snow white spars towering almost to the sky! The rampant lion on her house flag rearing defiance to all London town! From gilded trucks that caught the morning sun, down to her water-line, she was a living creation of wondrous grace and charm. Only once again did I feel so drawn to this old ship, that was four years later, when she and I parted company. No matter how hard the ship may have been, no matter what the man may have suffered in the making, the ship that has seen him turn from a foolish lad to a self reliant man will, for all time, have a soft spot in the heart of a sailor.



*A worship new I sing,
You captains, voyagers,
explorers, yours,
You engineers, you architects,
machinists, yours,
You, not for trade or
transportation only,
But in God's name, and for thy
sake, O soul.*

—Walt Whitman, 1819-1892

A discovery rediscovered

The Rev'd Ken Cahill

"It's a hard lesson to learn and even harder to experience, it seems."

I always have found Easter to be such an evocative time of celebration. The themes of Easter are so powerful in and of themselves and are made even more so after the preceding weeks of reflection in Lent. The themes of new life and resurrection and all that this means contrast so wonderfully with the experience of discipline and discomfort in the Lenten period.

During Easter I saw the movie *The Lady in the Van* starring Dame Maggie Smith as Mary Shepherd. The movie is based on the story of the author Alan Bennett who encounters Mary as a transient and 'motorised bag lady' and allows her to park her van and growing clutter in his driveway for three months, which turns into 15 years.

Smith, with her great talent, really delightfully portrays this cantankerous, ungrateful lady who you quickly come to realise has had another life that has caused her current predicament. The film also delightfully portrays the author/narrator and his internal struggles between himself as a writer gathering material for his plays and himself as a reticent man conflicted in his relationship with his own mother, especially as she descends into dementia and hospitalisation. Although repelled by Mary's mess and smell, Alan becomes very protective of her and seems to work out in his care of her, especially towards the end of her life, some of the care that he could not give his mother.

We discover as the film develops that Mary has a musical talent. As a young woman she had entered a religious order and there, in an effort to make her more humble, her superiors prevented her from playing the piano, telling her she needed to pray and not play. One can only wonder how much Mary might have added to her community's life and worship if she could have used her God-given talent.

Mary eventually escaped from the convent in her van but in doing so was involved in a fatal accident. Nothing can assuage her sense of guilt about this, or break the power this has over her. Much later, through a wonderful revelation, her burden of guilt is lifted. This then parallels the author's own liberation: he finally allows his sexuality to be expressed.

I recall an incident early in my ordained ministry. I was called to a local nursing home where the staff were concerned at the deterioration of one of their patients. It seems she had been visited by representatives of a sect and had become visibly distressed. The sect members had spoken a lot about sin. The lady explained to me that her signature had changed due to her age and that she felt that she was defrauding the bank when signing her bank withdrawal slips. This worried and distressed her. I did what I could to assure her and give her comfort. In this encounter I was introduced to one of the great themes of my life and ministry, and an understanding of the destructive power of the lack of a sense of self forgiveness. This inevitably leads to an inability to act with forgiveness and understanding towards others.

The sermons of Easter at All Saints highlighted again the theme of God's activity in providing a means of dealing with our sinfulness and announcing his forgiveness which is to be the church's message to the world. It's a hard lesson to learn and even harder to experience, it seems. It took me years in therapy and reflection during my ministry in the prison system as chaplain to Pentridge between 1982 and 1987 to confront this more really for myself. I am always appreciative to be offered once again this liberating understanding and to see with joy the great fruits of forgiveness in the lives of others.



Maggie Smith in *The Lady in the Van*, Dir. Nicholas Hytner, HiStar Productions/BBC Films, 2015

In search of the Sisters

The Rev'd Philippa Wetherell, CHN Oblate

In a previous article I wrote about becoming an Oblate of the Community of the Holy Name. Now I would like to tell you of research I have undertaken in relation to the CHN Sisters in Papua New Guinea. Some of you who know of the wonderful work the Community did through the Mission to the Streets and Lanes in Melbourne (1888–1997) may be surprised to learn that the Community did remarkable, and indeed pioneering, work in PNG, beginning in 1951 and continuing today, though in a different form, through the Community of the Visitation. The story of the Community and its ministry in Melbourne has been told by one of its own Sisters, Sheila Dunlop, in a remarkable book published in 2014 entitled *Some Suitable Women*. But no overall history of the ministry of CHN in Papua New Guinea has been written.

Because of my regard for the Community and my love for PNG, the country and its people, having spent eight years there, I feel passionately that the life and ministry of the Sisters there needs to be known and appreciated, especially by Australian Anglicans. Whether I, a woman in her later seventies, am capable of making this known in tangible form, I do not know. But the challenge is offered and I have accepted it.

At this stage I have only begun to research using the archives held at the Community House in Cheltenham. These take the form of Day Books which the Sister-in-Charge of the house in PNG was obliged to keep, and also letters written to Associates of the Community over these years, usually by the Mother Superior at the time. As you might imagine these Day Books, jottings by a Sister immersed in practical tasks, and leading a very busy life while struggling to maintain the life of a Religious in a culture utterly different from her own, are not explicit as to happenings; even less do they reveal the feelings and personal challenges faced daily by the Sisters. A further challenge is that very few Sisters who have spent any length of time in PNG are still alive, as indeed is the case with early missionaries who shared some part of the Sisters' lives during these years 1951–1977.

The Order came to be in PNG in 1951 at the invitation of the Diocesan Bishop, Philip Strong, an Englishman in the Anglo-Catholic tradition with a high regard for the Religious Life. He wrote to the Mother Superior at the time, Mother Ida, asking if a branch house of the Community could be founded in his Diocese. His Diocese at that time was the whole Anglican Church of New Guinea with its centre on the isolated plateau of Dogura in the northern part of Milne Bay Province near where the first missionaries had landed in 1891. The Cathedral dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul had been built there, and a band of lay missionaries lived there, teachers and nurses mainly, who ministered in the primary school and at the hospital. The Theological College and the training college for teachers were also at Dogura.

The Community asked Sisters Sara, Gracemary and Clare to form the first mission house of CHN outside Australia in New Guinea. They left by train and then by ship from Sydney on the very day of the terrible eruption of Mt Lamington in Northern Province (now Oro) on 21 January 1951, in which more than 3000 people, including many Anglican clergy and lay missionaries, were killed.

I try to imagine what it must have been like for those three Sisters arriving in their white tropical habits, long sleeves and veils, being helped out of the dinghy that brought them to the wharf after the harrowing sea journey from Samarai on the Diocesan boat. Hot and wind blown, sea sickness still lingering, they were transported by jeep up the rocky track to their new home at Dogura House. Of course, the Bishop and the mission staff, expatriate English and Australian missionaries, tried hard to make them comfortable and provide for their needs, but how strange it must have seemed and how far away must Melbourne and their settled Religious Life have seemed at that moment.

The Sisters' work was initially housekeeping for the mission staff at Dogura House and assisting the missionaries with caring for girls who came from outlying districts and villages to attend the primary school. They were also asked to train older girls for the work at the House. Before long the Sisters felt frustration that the Church had no provision for girls to be educated beyond primary school. Boys could go to Martyrs School reestablished after the war outside Popondetta. That within a few years of their arrival, having had to overcome the initial opposition of the Bishop, the Sisters began Holy Name School as a secondary school for New Guinean girls, was indeed a tremendous achievement. Sisters continued to administer and teach in the School until 1977 and Holy Name Grammar School flourishes to this day.

By boat to Dogura: the roof of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul appears through the mist



Saints Alive

Spoiler Alert! *Children of Men* (2006)

FILM REVIEW



“...the film also reveals the heart and soul of the Christian miracle in a contemporary way that is so compelling”

Bruce Clezy sends his film review from Indonesia, where he has volunteered to serve as a palliative care nurse

Sometimes we are so familiar with stories, we truly forget their meaning. Stories have the power to change history. Images can change the way we see the world. Yet in our media-rich lives, often we fail to understand the deeper significance of these tales. We are so bombarded with texts and pictures, with movies, advertisements and social media that ‘meaning’ often becomes ‘meaning-less’. I think this happens with our Christian stories too. We know them so well, and hear them so often, that sometimes we fail to understand their full impact, particularly in our complex world.

Take the Christmas story for example. God gave his only son in the form of a baby, to save the world from sin. Why is this story so significant today? And how is it that ‘new life’ and ‘babies’ are such powerful metaphors? I used to think I understood this story, until I saw *Children of Men*.

Children of Men (2006) is an extraordinary film. I had never heard of it before, until my son (who knows I have a regular movie column) recommended I see it. By the Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón (*Gravity*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*), the film stars Clive Owen (*Gosford Park*, *Closer*, *The Bourne Identity*) and Julianne Moore (*Still Alice*, *The Hours*, *Magnolia*). It is based on the novel of the same name by PD James, and like the novel the film has a strong feminist heart.

The year is 2027, and after 18 years of global infertility, humanity stands at a crossroads. Britain is a police state; the only nation on

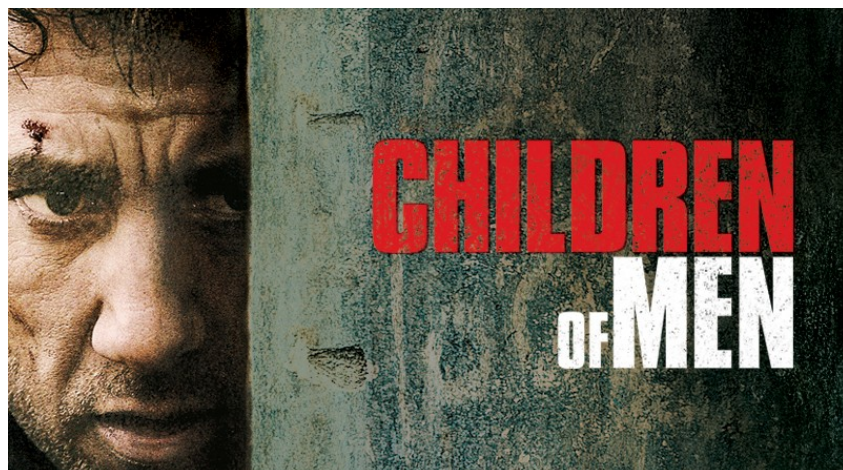
earth with a functioning government. Refugees flood into the country, fleeing war and economic turmoil, only to be rounded up and put into detention camps. A militant band of radicals, the Fishes, is desperately fighting for the rights of refugees. Rumours of an Islamist uprising are everywhere. Hope is desperately needed, but the world’s youngest living person, an Argentine man named “Baby Diego”, has been stabbed to death after spitting in the face of an autograph hunter. Baby Diego, explains the newsreader, often failed to cope with the pressures of being a celebrity. Office workers sit crying at their computers.

Does any of this sound vaguely familiar? Amid all this chaos we meet Theo Faron (Clive Owen) a former ‘fish’ activist, now turned cynical bureaucrat. He is kidnapped by the Fishes and asked to save a young illegal African immigrant named Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey), to which Theo reluctantly agrees but only for a large sum of money. On route to the coast Kee reveals to Theo that she is pregnant; this is a miracle, given the state of human infertility. Now understanding the importance of his mission Theo guides the young woman to safety.

This film is perhaps the most profound I have seen in years. Cuarón has mastered the art of the long-shot with many complex scenes lasting more than two minutes in just a single shot sequence. For a film made in 2006, its ability to predict the future (now present) is also extremely uncanny. But the film also reveals the heart and soul of the Christian miracle in a contemporary way that is so compelling and deeply moving. Kee jokes to Theo that hers is a virgin birth; but when she finally does give birth amidst the ruins of war (a single shot sequence that lasts more than three minutes in itself), her new baby daughter becomes a powerful symbol of new life, of hope and new beginnings.

Children of Men is a film rich in religious symbols and Christian iconography. Numerous critics have pointed to Theo’s pilgrimage, his adoption of sandals half way through the movie, and how animals are strangely drawn to him. He faces a Christ-like death. But to my mind, the real miracle of this movie is seeing the crowds of faces watching in awe, as the young mother Kee carries her baby through the burned-out wreckage of a city.

Clive Owen in Alfonso Cuarón’s *Children of Men*, Universal Studios 2006. The film received multiple Academy Award and BAFTA nominations. PD James declared that she was “pleased” with the film.



Don't forget the Brotherhood

We are still to do a letterbox drop this year as a way of reaching out to our neighbours, drawing attention to our partnership with the Community Store. The Store is a very valuable resource for the community, selling quality recycled clothing, books and home-ware. It is for us an important way to carry out mission in this place, supporting the work of the Brotherhood as an agency of social justice in Australia and outspoken advocate for the poor and disadvantaged.

The best way to support the shop is to donate and to buy there. Please continue to make the Community Store your first choice in both donating and buying quality recycled goods, and tell others around you what a good place it is. The Store is currently open Monday-Saturday 10 am to 4.30 pm.

For donations of large items, call 1300DONATE (1300 366 283).

Buy books online from
www.brotherhoodbooks.org.au



Lone Tree

Lone tree, there out at Calder Park
High on the mound with a background so stark
Lone tree, more a bush than a tree
High on the mound and so easy to see

Lone tree, I saw you there on the day of the race
Noticed by few in your solitary place
Lone tree you were watching us all up there on the hill
You were there all the time, and you're now there still

Lone tree, race day has come and gone
All the cars are packed up and everyone's gone home
So resume your solitude up there on the mound
Lone tree, I shall see you when the next race comes around.

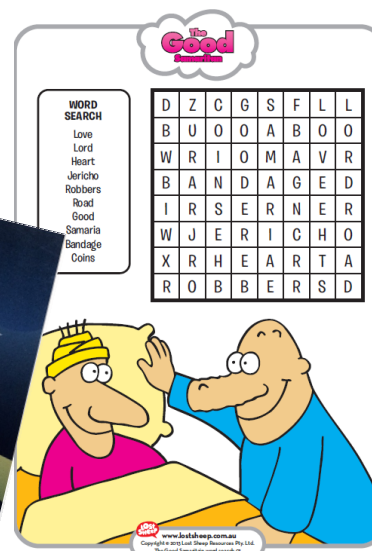
—Rob Lane



smAll Saints



The children at All Saints are learning about the parable of the Good Samaritan





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1860 — 2016

*We acknowledge the
Wurundjeri people as the
traditional owners of the land
on which our church was built,
and pay our respects to their
Elders, past, present and
future.*

Welcome!

We seek to share with others our experience of God and to make of All Saints Northcote a place of permanent welcome, a refuge and anchor for the human spirit.

Welcome the Lord – worship

Reverence for liturgy and joy in music are central to our worship. The observance of season and feast has continued in unbroken service in this place for 155 years. We seek to be close to God in the celebration of Baptism and in the breaking of the bread, and to draw others into a sense of the sacred. We hold to a middle way, resisting extremes, allowing for difference and listening to new ideas, but always anchored in prayer book and hymnal, in parish and Diocese, and in the great Anglican tradition.

Welcome the stranger – relationship

The defining spiritual features of our community are love, tolerance, warmth and inclusiveness. We are less concerned about numbers, money, appearances, power or status than about hospitality, participation, and the gifts each person brings, regardless of their age or abilities or sexual orientation or any other personal characteristic. We love children and young people. We treat outcasts and fringe dwellers compassionately and support church agencies of social action.

Welcome the friend – partnership

We are enriched by our connection with St Paul's Fairfield and St James the Great Thornbury as part of a united parish, and we respect the different identities of each community. We value our connection with the Brotherhood of St Laurence and are willing participants in ecumenical exchange and inter-faith activity.

Saints Alive is published on our website along with other information about All Saints

allsaintsnorthcote.org.au

Congratulations



Very happy to be here with us!

The All Saints community was delighted to hear of the arrival of a granddaughter to Andrew and Pamela. We pray for God's blessing on this little girl and her parents, and send our warmest congratulations to the new grandparents in the Vicarage.

