

St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church

Moore Street, Adelaide



An open, welcoming and inclusive community
in the heart of the City of Adelaide

Keeping Community Thursday 17 December 2020

Spiritual Resources & Reflections

Dear friends,

The relaxation of Covid-19 restrictions makes it possible to once again worship on Sunday, when Mass is sung at 10 am. The church is also open for private prayer and public worship on Tuesday and Thursday from 11.30 am to 1 pm, and Mass is offered at 12.10 pm after the Angelus at 12 noon.

The decision to return to worship in community, even for private prayer, is not a straightforward matter, so we will continue to produce these newsletters for now.

In these Thursday newsletters, we offer ideas and opportunities for nourishing our personal and communal spiritual lives.

1. From Fr Graeme – Welcome the Goodwill

Last night, Nance and I were invited to a “Carols by Candlelight” in a neighbour’s garden down the road. All asked of us was to bring two chairs.

This was just one of many such acts of goodwill displayed at this time of the year. It is truly amazing how kind so many people become as Christmas approaches. Adding to one’s amazement is the knowledge that much of the goodwill is shown by people of little or no Christian faith.

Nevertheless, I was expecting a programme of “carols” which would be largely secular with perhaps a few traditional carols inserted. Instead we discovered that the neighbour belonged to a Gospel church in the city and that she had resources of musicians and her pastor on hand to lead the evening. The carols were all traditional with electronic accompaniment. Everyone sang lustily and the evening went well. The pastor spoke for a while — longer than he promised, but everyone’s attention was more or less held.

I sat there wondering how much of the theology of the carols would be understood and appreciated by the neighbours. In other words I was being a bit cynical and possibly somewhat superior. All along, though, I had appreciated the host’s gesture towards us all in opening her garden for carols. No matter which carols or songs has been chosen my appreciation would have persisted.

There is no doubt that our society softens a good deal before Christmas. I really think it is important that we all welcome this no matter from which source of inspiration it springs. In most cases it springs from some knowledge of the meaning of Christmas and perhaps some memories of kindness and goodwill from long ago in life.

Our prayer for people in our society can become too negative if we allow it. We must not allow this. The Gospel reading at Mass on Tuesday concerned two sons – one who promised to do as his father asked then did not, while the other son flatly refused to obey his father but later changed his mind and did as he had been asked. It was the second son who was praised by Jesus for his actions. The religious opponents of Jesus were condemned by him for saying much about what needed to be done then doing precisely nothing themselves. They just talked.

We should be grateful when people show us kindness, especially before Christmas. They may not understand about Christianity as much as we do but they manage to grasp the essence of the behaviour Christianity asks of us.

Our prayer at this time of the year can be petitions of thanks for society's goodwill at Christmas. Some of us have something to learn from society in this regard while fortunately others of us lead the surge in goodwill.

Fr Graeme Kaines
Locum Priest

2. Daily Prayer

Most Christian denominations have forms for prayer in the morning and the evening, and at other times of the day. Morning and Evening Prayer in the Anglican church's *A Prayer Book for Australia*, are available in either a fixed form (pages 3 – 33) or a different form for each day of the week (pages 383 – 424). The Bible readings for each day can be found in *The Australian Lectionary*, and for reference the readings for the coming week are:

	Morning Prayer	Evening Prayer
Thursday 17 December	Ps 106.1-24 Isaiah 17.1-11 Mark 10.46 – 11.11	Ps 106.25-50 Isaiah 54 Revelation 19.1-10
Friday 18 December	Ps 107.1-22 Isaiah 17.12 – 18.7 Mark 11.12-26	Ps 107.23-43 Isaiah 55 Revelation 19.11-21
Saturday 19 December	Ps 110, 111 Isaiah 19.1-15 Mark 11.27 – 12.12	Ps 112, 113 Isaiah 56 Revelation 20.1-10
Sunday 20 December <i>The 4th Sunday of Advent</i>	Ps 72.12-21 Hebrews 1.8 – 2.4	Ps 89.26-38 2 Samuel 7.18-29 Mark 12.35-37
Monday 21 December <i>St Thomas</i>	Ps 34 Job 42.1-6 1 Peter 1.3-9	Ps 92 2 Samuel 15.17-21 John 11.1-16
Tuesday 22 December	Ps 118.1-18 Isaiah 27.2-13 Mark 12.41 – 13.13	Ps 118.19-29 Isaiah 58 Revelation 21.22 – 22.5
Wednesday 23 December	Ps 124, 125, 126 Isaiah 28.1-13 Mark 13.14-37	Ps 127, 128, 129 Isaiah 59.1-15a Revelation 22.6-13
Thursday 24 December	Ps 130, 131, 133 Isaiah 28.14-29 Galatians 3.23 – 4.7	Ps 85 Isaiah 33.17-22 Revelation 22.14-21

Online Resources

There is a complete online version of Daily Prayer from *A Prayer Book for Australia* for each day available at Australian Daily Prayer <https://dailyprayer.ampers.x10.mx/>. There is also a free app for mobile devices from the App Store or Google Play. The Church of England provides an online version of its orders for Daily Prayer at <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer>. This is also available as a free app (App Store or Google Play). The Divine Office of the Catholic Church is available online at www.ibreviary.com and is also available as a free app (App Store or Google Play).

Times of Prayer

Many people find it helpful to make a particular time daily for prayer and reflection. One option might be to join your prayer with those of the wider world at some special times during the day. While we cannot attend at the church at the present time, you may like to join the wider community in praying the Angelus at 9 am, 12 noon and 6 pm.

3. Reflections and Meditations

Fr Graeme and others within our community will continue to prepare Reflections for Sundays and Holy Days for posting on the web page. Fr Philip Carter's meditations and spiritual reflections will in the future be presented on our blog, <https://stmarymagdalenesadelaide.org/>. To access the tab, simply go to the blog and select the "Spirit matters" tab on the top.

If you would like to receive an email update when there is a new posting on the blog, whether for a Sunday or weekday service, or for meditations and other supports for prayer, please subscribe to the blog using the box on the right-hand side of the page.

Service booklets as PDF files are still available for Sunday and weekday services, both on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

4. In the Church's Calendar

In the week before Christmas, the church celebrates only a single saint, St Thomas the Apostle.

St Thomas has long been known mainly for a single remark that caused him to be named "Doubting Thomas." But if he doubted, he also believed. He made what is certainly the most explicit statement of faith in the New Testament: "My Lord and My God!" and, in so expressing his faith, gave Christians a prayer that will be said till the end of time.

Thomas should be equally well-known for his courage. Perhaps what he said was impetuous—and along with the other disciples, he ran away from danger—but he can scarcely have been insincere when he expressed his willingness to die with Jesus. The occasion was when Jesus proposed to go to Bethany after Lazarus had died. Since Bethany was near Jerusalem, this meant walking into the very midst of his enemies and to almost certain death. Realizing this, Thomas said to the other apostles, "Let us also go to die with him" (John 11:16b).



The example of St Thomas is one which we later Christians can all take to heart. Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." (John 20:29). A salutary lesson to us all, two thousand years on.

Thomas shares the lot of Peter the impetuous, James and John, the "sons of thunder," Philip and his foolish request to see the Father—indeed all the apostles in their weakness and lack of understanding. We must not exaggerate these facts, however, for Christ did not pick worthless men. But their human weakness again points up the fact that holiness is a gift of God, not a human creation; it is given to ordinary men and women with weaknesses; it is God who gradually transforms the weaknesses into the image of Christ, the courageous, trusting, and loving one.

St Thomas's Day was long a popular day for ordinations, so that the newly ordained clergy could officiate for the first time at Christmas.

5. The Church Fathers on St Thomas

From a homily on the Gospels by Saint Gregory the Great

Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. He was the only disciple absent; on his return he heard what had happened but refused to believe it. The Lord came a second time; he offered his side for the disbelieving disciple to touch, held out his hands, and showing the scars of his wounds, healed the wound of his disbelief.

Dearly beloved, what do you see in these events? Do you really believe that it was by chance that this chosen disciple was absent, then came and heard, heard and doubted, doubted and touched, touched and believed? It was not by chance but in God's providence. In a marvellous way God's mercy arranged that the disbelieving disciple, in touching the wounds of his master's body, should heal our wounds of disbelief. The disbelief of Thomas has done more for our faith than the faith of the other disciples. As he touches Christ and is won over to belief, every doubt is cast aside and our faith is strengthened. So the disciple who doubted, then felt Christ's wounds, becomes a witness to the reality of the resurrection.

Touching Christ, he cried out: My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him: Because you have seen me, Thomas, you have believed. Paul said: Faith is the guarantee of things hoped for, the evidence of things unseen. It is clear, then, that faith is the proof of what can not be seen. What is seen gives knowledge, not faith. When Thomas saw and touched, why was he told: You have believed because you have seen me? Because what he saw and what he believed were different things. God cannot be seen by mortal man. Thomas saw a human being, whom he acknowledged to be God, and said: My Lord and my God. Seeing, he believed; looking at one who was true man, he cried out that this was God, the God he could not see.

What follows is reason for great joy: Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed. There is here a particular reference to ourselves; we hold in our hearts one we have not seen in the flesh. We are included in these words, but only if we follow up our faith with good works. The true believer practises what he believes. But of those who pay only lip service to faith, Paul has this to say: They profess to know God, but they deny him in their works. Therefore James says: Faith without works is dead.

6. The last days of Advent – The “O” Antiphons

Every day, the church celebrates “The Divine Office”, the daily round of prayer at morning, throughout the day, and at night.

In the last days of Advent, from 17 December, a custom arose as early as the 8th century whereby the daily singing of the Magnificat, Mary’s song “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord”, was preceded by a special “antiphon” that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament. These antiphons were the first of their type, ancient poems written in the early centuries of the Church for reading in this time of preparation.

Each antiphon begins with an exclamation of a title for the Messiah drawn from the Old Testament, a deliberate way of connecting the coming of Christ with the prophetic writings of the Hebrews scriptures, and to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfilment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well.

- *O Wisdom of our God Most High, guiding creation with power and love:
come to teach us the path of knowledge!*
- *O Leader (Lord) of the House of Israel, giver of the Law to Moses on Sinai:
come to rescue us with your mighty power!*
- *O Root of Jesse’s stem, sign of God’s love for all his people:
come to save us without delay!*
- *O Key of David, opening the gates of God’s eternal Kingdom:
come and free the prisoners of darkness!*
- *O Radiant Dawn, splendour of eternal light, sun of justice:
come and shine on those who dwell in darkness and in the shadow of death.*
- *O King of all nations and keystone of the Church:
come and save man, whom you formed from the dust!*
- *O Emmanuel, our King and Giver of Law:
come to save us, Lord our God!*

Along with these exclamations, the repeated use of the imperative “Come!” embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

The popular hymn “O come, O come, Emmanuel” draws on the O Antiphons for its inspiration. For some years – though not, of course, this year – we have sung verses of this hymn each week as we light the Advent candle. The repetition of the hymn and its beautiful tune anchors us firmly in the longing and anticipation of Advent, and also connects us to the evening prayer of the whole Church in the last week of Advent.

A Meditation on the O Antiphons

O Wisdom,

Sophia's child,
and Mary's too,
bring us back to you.

O Adonai,

set us free
of fear, despair,
misogyny.

O Justice Flower,
of Jesse tree,
uproot our hatreds.
Wash us clean
in just-reign waters,
plant us deep in Thee.

O Key of David,
open heaven's gate
unlock, unblock,
a captive people
too long enthralled
by hate.

O Radiant Dawn,
light the way
of all who long
to preach, to teach,
to consecrate
heavenly hosts
of God's indwelling.

O Emmanuel,
strengthen weary arms,
steady trembling knees
bring surcease of sorrow.

O Advent Light,
dispel death's dark shadow.
Awaken a waiting world
to life's fresh-blessed tomorrow.

Sr Christine Shenk CSJ

7. Intentions for Your Daily Prayers

We continue to pray throughout the week for the world and the church. These intentions may be helpful in your private or family prayers.

For the world. The leaders of the world as they seek to respond to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. For medical researchers, that they may be granted knowledge and wisdom as they search for a vaccine and cure. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome.

For the church. For all those who are challenged to be church in a different and unfamiliar way. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Dioceses of South Dakota (USA) and El-Obeid (Sudan); in our national church, pray for the Diocese of North Queensland; and within the Diocese of Adelaide, for the Tamil Congregation at Lockleys.

For our local community. For the Collective as it resumes its ministry to the community in the Drop-In Centre is suspended, and for its guests as they seek places to eat and rest. For the Magdalene Centre, as it deals with the need to change the way it delivers services in order to safeguard the health of customers, staff and volunteers.

For those in need. For all those who are sick in body, mind or spirit. For all those affected by the COVID-19 coronavirus and all who care for them. For those who are commended to our prayers, especially Paull, Valerie, David, Sim, Chris, Clarice, Philip, Phyllis, Dulcie, Jasmin and Henry.

For those who have died. For those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; all those who have died recently, especially June Schaeffer; those who have died as a result of COVID-19; and those whose anniversaries of death occur at about this time;. ✠ Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

For the saints. For the Blessed Virgin Mary, St Joseph, St Mary Magdalene, St Thomas, and holy women and men of every time and place.



This newsletter will normally be distributed weekly on Thursday. Any appropriate items should be emailed to the Parish Office, omarymag@anglicaresa.com.au, by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

