

St Mary Magdalene's Anglican Church  
Moore Street, Adelaide

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



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## Keeping Community Spiritual Resources & Reflections

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Thursday 27 July 2023

Dear friends,

This newsletter was developed as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold and our ability to gather for worship was so severely challenged. Thanks be to God, we are now able to gather together to celebrate the Word and Sacraments, and to come to church for private prayer. But the demand for and appeal of these newsletters has continued.

Sunday Mass is offered weekly at 10 am, and the church will also be open on Thursday between 11.30 am and 1 pm, with the Angelus at noon and Mass at 12.10 pm.

These newsletters are intended to provide some resources for prayer and reflection: enjoy!



### 1. Fr Steven writes ... It is a mystery

Clergy are encouraged to undertake study leave – the relevant ordinance calls it “continuing ministry education” – for two weeks (ten working days) including one Sunday in each calendar year. I will be commencing study leave on Tuesday 8 August. How that is used varies. In my case, it is a chance to read some works in depth. I am also working on an article for a journal on political philosophy. There are five of us writing articles. I am the only theologian; the rest are philosophers. It began about 18 months ago, when a friend asked me to join a panel to review his latest book. The panel was a great success. In the process, we realized there was more to this than meets the eye. But let me put this in context.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a rumour going around in academic circles and the public square that religion was on the way out. Or at the least, religion was irrelevant. This was known as the secularisation thesis. But scholars found that it is hard to get rid of religious ideas. For example, populist leaders, the so-called strongmen, often present themselves in messianic terms as called personally to fulfil the destiny of their people. Trump's 2016 inauguration speech was a classic example of this religious embellishment. In other words, religion will not go away.

In our post-secular age, the obvious instance of incorrigible religion is the rise of religious fundamentalism and more generally the rise of the religious right. Even White supremacists are prone to claim that they are good faithful evangelical Christians (even if they have not been to church for decades, not to mention the appalling racism).

My interest is in the concept of *atheism*. On the one hand, atheism is generally understood as meaning that there is no God. On the other hand, and this is a more nuanced issue, it is not God *per se*, but certain interpretations of the divine that are repudiated. On this note, *theism*

is the view of God separate from the world, but with the capacity to intervene. Since WW2, this view of God has been challenged because of widespread violence and suffering.

In the Anglican tradition, however, we are conscious that faith begins and ends in mystery. From Moses and the burning bush (Exodus 4) to our Celtic and Medieval mystics, as well as our theologians, poets, musicians, and liturgists, mystery of the divine is vital. The divine mystery created the cosmos and fills our lives with wonder and delight. Often, in the face of mystery, the best response is silence.

I see myself as in the tradition of negative theology. This is the tradition of not-knowing. That is, we cannot put divine mystery into a box. In some cases, moreover, it is a matter of taking the divine out of the box (e.g., God as judge). This is the practice of un-knowing. From this point of view, a-theism means not putting God in a box.

The older I get, the more I try to immerse myself in divine mystery. It is more about what Karl Rahner described as the mystagogical process. That is, the life of faith is where, in the footsteps of Christ and the apostles, we live in, and we are transformed by divine mystery. Of course, this is where being part of a compassionate and inclusive faith community, with its shared stories, symbols, music, and rituals, is so important. In fact, our Sunday liturgy has a lot to offer. It preserves and celebrates that past but is open to the new.

It is a mystery indeed

Fr Steven

## 2. Fr Steven writes ... A Very Special Vestry

Thank you to all those who contributed to the Special Vestry Meeting on 9 July. Thanks, once again, to our wonderful catering and cleaning-up team. Moreover, if you were not able to be there on Sunday, this is your chance to join in.

At the Special Vestry, we began to develop our parish's theology, where theology is about our shared reflections on life and faith. It is important to do this for its intrinsic worth, but it will also help in the future with planning and priorities.

In technical terms, we are developing an ecclesiology. Ecclesiology is a theology about what it means to be a church. It comes from the word *ecclesia*, which means *assembly*, and it is derived from ancient Greek democratic gatherings in the public square. The apostle Paul uses the term as a way of describing the church, where *church* means an open assembly rather than a building (e.g., Galatians).

Our theology encompasses our experience and our questions, as well as Scripture, tradition, and reason. In the spirit of Rahner's notion that God works from the inside out, we began on Sunday by sharing our values and our passions. Specifically, I was asking about our core values. Here are the key ideas/themes from Sunday:

- Acceptance, an open space, a multi-space, welcoming, learning, sacramentality, inclusion, questioning, clarity, service, volunteering, reflection, advocacy, challenging, witnessing, mystery, divine other, liturgy, music, arts, past-present, capacity to make public statements.

I am putting these ideas/themes in a format (below) we can work build on. I am also inviting you to reflect on this, passing on to me your questions, comments, and suggestions as this is a living document. I have added some theological commentary: -

- St Mary Magdalene's is a welcoming and inclusive Anglican faith community. We follow Jesus, the human one, who worked and died for others in the name of love. His humanity, compassion, and courage shape our faith and practice.
- As a faith community, we are part of a (holy) open space. This is a space for learning, sharing, growing, caring, grieving, and celebrating. We are committed to a life of care, generous service in the church and the wider community. This care is grounded in a commitment to love, social justice, challenging injustice, and advocacy in the public square.
- We are grounded in the life of divine mystery, the divine other, which is disclosed to us in the life of Jesus, and his friends from Galilee. We know and celebrate this mystery in daily life, in friendship and in solitude, in our liturgies, our music, and the arts. All this represents, what we call our sacramental view of life, which is honoured in our sharing of bread and wine.

Please let me know what you think.

Fr Steven

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### 3. "The Conversation" Discussion Group

The Conversation is a discussion group running on Thursdays from 6 July to 3 August, where the group's questions and aspirations set the agenda. It is based on adult-learning principles, with theological and biblical input from me.

In the first week, we canvassed a range of issues, focusing on the complexity of human experience, the nature of suffering, and our shared humanity. From this, we came up with discussion points for rest of the series. The remaining topics are:

#### July 27

What about the Church? In the fourth century, under Constantine, it became "institutionalized" amplifying problems of power and politics in the church. How do we live creatively with our institution? The importance of church as an *ekklesia* (an open space). How do we relate to other denominations? Other faiths?

#### August 3

An exploration of mystery. The importance of "Aha!" experiences. What is holiness then? Understanding the limits of monotheism? New concepts: *an-arche* and *aleph*. Understanding the Trinity as symbol and story. What about love, forgiveness, and new beginnings?

**Thursday mornings at 10 in the mission hall. All welcome.**

Fr Steven

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### 4. 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 *A Prayer Book for Australia*, are available in either a fixed form (pp 3-33) or a form for each day of the week (pp 383-424).

#### Online Resources

There is an 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. The Divine Office of the Catholic Church is available online at [www.ibreviary.com](http://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, especially the [Angelus](#) at 9 am, 12 noon and 6 pm.

## 5. Reflections and Meditations

In addition to Fr Steven's regular reflection in this newsletter, which is uploaded to the web page for wider accessibility, Fr Philip Carter's meditations and spiritual reflections are presented on our blog, <https://stmarymagdalenesadelade.org/>.

To access these meditations, 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 on the web site and on the Parish's Facebook page.

## 6. This Week in the Calendar

This week the church has its annual memorials of three figures from the earliest days of the Church: Mary and Martha of Bethany and Joseph of Arimathea; the 16th century priest and religious St Ignatius of Loyola, and the 19th century social reformer William Wilberforce.

**Mary and Martha of Bethany**, and their brother Lazarus were evidently close friends of Jesus. Jesus came to their home simply as a welcomed guest. The sisters feel free to call on Jesus at their brother's death, even though a return to Judea at that time seems almost certain death.

The meeting with Jesus in Luke 10 is a difficult story about the relationship of faith and works. At dinner, Mary sits next to Jesus, listening to him speak, while Martha busies herself with serving the meal—and is none too pleased about being "put upon" to do all the work. Jesus ultimately gives Martha a gentle rebuke, "you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her".



Our faith proposes to us the liberating truth that faith and works are two blades on one pair of scissors. And the heart and soul of a eucharistic faith is that Christ, truly God and truly human, and prayer become incarnate in works of love just as the word became flesh. As Pope Francis puts it with simple elegance: "You pray for the hungry. Then you feed them. That's how prayer works."

**Joseph of Arimathea** is recorded in all four gospels as the one who took responsibility for the burial of Jesus after the crucifixion. The gospels record that he was a person of some eminence and influence, but little more. Over time, many legends accumulated around Joseph. In one account, he was imprisoned for his faith; in others, he was jailed, then miraculously released.

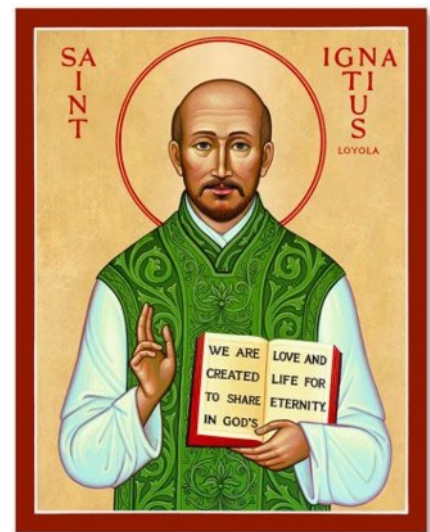


In the Middle Ages, he is associated with the Holy Grail, and another story locates him in England, where one night he set his walking staff on the ground while he slept, only for the staff to take root and grow into a mighty tree – the Glastonbury Thorn. What we do know of Joseph is that he risked himself and his reputation for the sake of Christ.

**Ignatius of Loyola** was on his way to military fame and fortune when a cannon ball shattered his leg. During his convalescence, Ignatius whiled away the time reading a life of Christ and lives of the saints. His conscience was deeply touched, and a long, painful turning to Christ began.

Having seen the Mother of God in a vision, he made a pilgrimage to her shrine at Montserrat near Barcelona. He remained for almost a year, and it was during this year of conversion that Ignatius began to write down material that later became his greatest work, the *Spiritual Exercises*.

In 1534, at the age of 43, Ignatius and six others—one of whom was Saint Francis Xavier—vowed to live in poverty and chastity and to go to the Holy Land. If this became impossible, they vowed to offer themselves to the apostolic service of the pope. The latter became the only choice. Four years later Ignatius made the association permanent. The new Society of Jesus was approved by Pope Paul III, and Ignatius was elected to serve as the first general.



All activity in the order was to be guided by a true love of the Church and unconditional obedience to the Pope, for which reason all professed members took a fourth vow to go wherever the Pope should send them for the salvation of souls. In his concept, obedience was to be prominent, to assure the effectiveness and mobility of the members of the order.

Ignatius was a true mystic. He centred his spiritual life on the essential foundations of Christianity—the Trinity, Christ, the Eucharist.

His spirituality is expressed in the Jesuit motto, *Ad maiorem Dei gloriam*—“for the greater glory of God.”

**William Wilberforce** (1759-1833) was born into a wealthy family and during his University studies became interested in politics, being elected to Parliament aged just 21. He was evidently a dissolute young man, but changed his lifestyle completely when he embraced evangelical Christianity, rapidly gaining an interest in social reform, particularly the improvement of factory conditions in Britain.

He was a prime mover in the long quest to abolish slavery, and for 18 years he regularly introduced anti-slavery motions in parliament, with legislation finally passed in 1807. The 1807 Act did not free those who were already slaves, and it was not until shortly before his death in 1833 that an act was passed giving freedom to all slaves in the British empire. Wilberforce stands as a magnificent example of undaunted and faithful action alongside a total, radical faith in Christ.



## 7. St Mary and St Martha - from a sermon by St Augustine of Hippo

Our Lord's words teach us that though we labour among the many distractions of this world, we should have but one goal. For we are but travellers on a journey without as yet a fixed abode; we are on our way, not yet in our native land; we are in a state of longing, not yet of enjoyment. But let us continue on our way, and continue without sloth or respite, so that we may ultimately arrive at our destination.

Martha and Mary were sisters, related not only by blood but also by religious aspirations. They stayed close to our Lord and both served him harmoniously when he was among them. And they received their Lord, the creature their Creator, to serve him bodily food while they were to be fed by the Spirit. For the Lord willed to put on the form of a slave, and under this form to be fed by his own servants; since he was in the flesh he would indeed be hungry and thirsty.

Thus was the Lord received as a guest who *came unto his own and his own received him not; but as many as received him, he gave them the power to become sons of God*, adopting those who were servants and making them his brothers, ransoming the captives and making them his co-heirs. No one of you should say: "Blessed are they who have deserved to receive Christ into their homes!" Do not grieve or complain that you were born in a time when you can no longer see God in the flesh. He did not in fact take this privilege from you. As he says: *Whatever you have done to the least of my brothers, you did to me.*

But you, Martha, if I may say so, are blessed for your good service, and for your labours you seek the reward of peace. Now you are much occupied in nourishing the body, admittedly a holy one. But when you come to the heavenly homeland will you find a traveller to welcome, someone hungry to feed, or thirsty to whom you may give drink, someone ill whom you could visit, or quarrelling whom you could reconcile, or dead whom you could bury?

No, there will be none of these tasks there. What you will find there is what Mary chose. There we shall not feed others, we ourselves shall be fed. Thus what Mary chose in this life will be realized there in all its fullness; she was gathering fragments from that rich banquet, the Word of God. Do you wish to know what we will have there? The Lord himself tells us when he says of his servants, *Amen, I say to you, he will make them recline and passing he will serve them.*

## 8. St Joseph of Arimathea – from a homily by St Gregory Nazianzen

Let us take our part in the Passover prescribed by the law, not in a literal way, but according to the teaching of the Gospel; not in an imperfect way, but perfectly; not only for a time, but eternally. Let us regard as our home the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly one; the city glorified by angels, not the one laid waste by armies.

We must now pass through the first veil and approach the second, turning our eyes toward the Holy of Holies. I will say more: we must sacrifice ourselves to God, each day and in everything we do, accepting all that happens to us for the sake of the Word, imitating his passion by our sufferings, and honouring his blood by shedding our own. We must be ready to be crucified.

If you are a Simon of Cyrene, take up your cross and follow Christ. If you are crucified beside him like one of the thieves, now, like the good thief, acknowledge your God. For your sake, and because of your sin, Christ himself was regarded as a sinner; for his sake, therefore, you must cease to sin. Worship him who was hung on the cross because of you, even if you are hanging there yourself. Derive some benefit from the very shame; purchase salvation with your death. Enter paradise with Jesus, and discover how far you have fallen. Contemplate the glories there, and leave the other scoffing thief to die outside in his blasphemy.

If you are a Joseph of Arimathea, go to the one who ordered his crucifixion, and ask for Christ's body. Make your own the expiation for the sins of the whole world. If you are a Nicodemus, like the man who worshipped God by night, bring spices and prepare Christ's body for burial. If you are one of the Marys, or Salome, or Joanna, weep in the early morning. Be the first to see the stone rolled back, and even the angels perhaps, and Jesus himself.

## 9. From the life of Saint Ignatius from his own words by Luis Gonzalez

*Put inward experiences to the test to see if they come from God*

Ignatius was passionately fond of reading worldly books of fiction and tales of knight-errantry. When he felt he was getting better, he asked for some of these books to pass the time. But no book of that sort could be found in the house; instead they gave him a life of Christ and a collection of the lives of saints written in Spanish.

By constantly reading these books he began to be attracted to what he found narrated there. Sometimes in the midst of his reading he would reflect on what he had read. Yet at other times he would dwell on many of the things which he had been accustomed to dwell on previously. But at this point our Lord came to his assistance, insuring that these thoughts were followed by others which arose from his current reading.

While reading the life of Christ our Lord or the lives of the saints, he would reflect and reason with himself: "What if I should do what Saint Francis or Saint Dominic did?" In this way he let his mind dwell on many thoughts; they lasted a while until other things took their place. Then those vain and worldly images would come into his mind and remain a long time. This sequence of thoughts persisted with him for a long time.

But there was a difference. When Ignatius reflected on worldly thoughts, he felt intense pleasure; but when he gave them up out of weariness, he felt dry and depressed. Yet when he thought of living the rigorous sort of life he knew the saints had lived, he not only experienced pleasure when he actually thought about it, but even after he dismissed these thoughts, he still experienced great joy. Yet he did not pay attention to this, nor did he appreciate it until one day, in a moment of insight, he began to marvel at the difference. Then he understood his experience: thoughts of one kind left him sad, the others full of joy. And this was the first time

he applied a process of reasoning to his religious experience. Later on, when he began to formulate his spiritual exercises, he used this experience as an illustration to explain the doctrine he taught his disciples on the discernment of spirits.

## 10. William Wilberforce and Sanctification

William Wilberforce resolved to daily catalogue his sins along with his acts of faithfulness, just so that he could track his spiritual growth in minute detail. He also made a habit of listing out the daily mercies in his life as he tracked God's good hand of providence. He would identify the main defects he saw in himself, the temptations he faced that day, and the ones to which he had succumbed. Finally, he would often close an entry by humbly recording behaviours that he was grateful to recognise had in some way brought glory to God or advanced the gospel. Through all his journals, it is painstakingly obvious that his goal was to cultivate a taste for heaven:

"To Thee, O God, I fly, through the Saviour; enable me to live more worthy of my holy calling; to be more useful and efficient, that my time may not be frittered away unprofitably to myself and others, but that I really may be of use ... and adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour."

Of all the treasures to be found in Wilberforce's journal, his deep gratitude to God for His provision and providence is also obvious: "What cause to offer thankfulness. Which way soever I look I am heaped up with blessings and mercies of all sorts and sizes. I wish not to spend time in writing, but oh, let me record the loving-kindnesses of the Lord."

On his death bed, not long before he entered the Lord's presence, Wilberforce said, "I hope no man on earth has a stronger sense of sinfulness and untrustworthiness before God than I do." When his son visited him during those final days, Wilberforce asked his son to pray for him. Unsurprisingly, he didn't ask his son to pray for renewed health or comfort during his final days—he asked for increased sanctification: "... join with me in praying that the short remainder of my life hours may be spent in gaining that spirituality of mind which will fit me for heaven."

To the end, Wilberforce desired to be more holy. His dying wish was to be Godlier—more like his Saviour. He understood what every sinner saved by grace knows—that even moments before reaching heaven, no sinner is fit for the kingdom of God. Only Christ can provide the righteousness required for entry into God's presence.

## 11. Intentions for Your Daily Prayers

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

*Pray for the world.* For the leaders of the world as they seek to respond to the challenges that beset the international community. For refugees and asylum seekers, that they may find places of safety and welcome. For all who work for peace and justice. For reconciliation with the first custodians of this land.

*Pray for the church.* For all those who are striving to be church in the modern world, that we may be alert to the signs of the times and their interpretation in the light of the Gospel. In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, pray for the Diocese of Waikato and Taranaki (Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia). In our national church, pray for the Diocese of Willochra; and in our own Diocese of Adelaide, for the Community Chaplain, Joan Claring-Bould.

*Pray for our local community.* For the Collective as it manages the delivery of the Saturday Night Mary Mags Dinner. For the Magdalene Centre, its customers, staff and volunteers, as they minister in God's name among those in crisis and in need of support and assistance.



*Pray for those in need.* Pray for all those who are troubled in body, mind or spirit, especially Paull, Sim, Jasmin, John Edwards (priest), Peter Garland (priest), Robert Whalley (priest), John Parkes (bishop), Stephan Clark (priest), Mark, Olivia, Nance, Neil, Elaine, Neil, Hugh, Bart O'Donovan (priest) and Prue O'Donovan (Priest).

*For those who have died.* Those who have worked and worshipped in this place before us; those who have died as a result of COVID-19 and in other tragic circumstances; those who have died recently, especially Jennifer Wilson, Jane Wilson, James King and Christina Theseira, and those whose anniversaries of death occur at 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, and holy women and men of every time and place.

This newsletter will normally be distributed weekly on Tuesday. Any appropriate items should be emailed to the Parish Office, [StMMAdelaide.Parish@outlook.com](mailto:StMMAdelaide.Parish@outlook.com), by Tuesday evening at 5 pm.

#### Directory

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Hon Assisting Priests	Revd Sr Juliana SI, Fr Philip Carter, Fr Graeme Kaines
Churchwardens	Peter Burdon ☎ 0414 471 894, Alison McAllister ☎ 0433 551 267
Parish Council	The Priest and Wardens <i>ex officio</i> ; Catherine Freriks, Alison McAllister, Hamish McLachlan, Peter Turner.
Nomination Committee	John Dow, Catherine Freriks, Annemarie Van Putten
Synod Representatives	Ashley Durham, Catherine Freriks