

# Beyond 2020 Vision

A Publication of Morialta Uniting Church

December 2023

Morialta Uniting Church—follow us on Facebook or check out our website at [www.morialtauca.org.au](http://www.morialtauca.org.au)

## Welcome to our December edition

Colin Cargill, Editor and Helena Begg, Publisher

In this issue, Aunty Rev Dr Anne Pattel-Gray reflects on “... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”, while other writers reflect on the meaning of Advent and Christmas in our lives.

We publish photos from the market and David Purling’s camera and a report from the Morialta UC Friendship Group.

**The deadline for the February Vision will be 26<sup>th</sup> January.** Either drop a copy in to Nicole at the office or call/email Colin on 0427 122 106 or [snout-n-about@bigpond.com](mailto:snout-n-about@bigpond.com)

Go well.

## The word becoming flesh

Adapted from a reflection by Aunty Rev Dr Anne Pattel-Gray –  
Common Grace



Each year at Christmas my mind wanders to the birth of Jesus and the significance of the Son of God being born, and what this means for all Christians and not just Australia First Nations peoples.

When I think about the birth of Jesus, my mind reflects on the notion of the ‘Word becoming flesh’ through the birth of Jesus.

In John 1:13-14, ‘... and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory; glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.’

Just thinking about the ‘Word becoming flesh’ through the birth of Jesus is such powerful imagery of the Creator Spirit’s ‘Word’ living and dwelling amongst us. This makes me feel comforted, strengthened and spirituality rich to think our Creator Spirit walks alongside us and is with us each and every day of our lives. What a powerful concept to cherish.

I am deeply moved by this knowledge as Christmas is, to me, a reminder of the ‘Word’ of the Creator Spirit living in us and amongst us – it is not some distant memory where the Word is

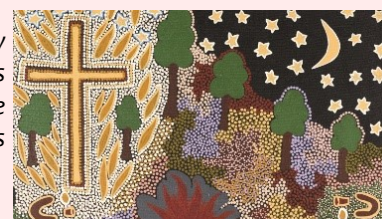
out of our reach, up in the sky, or a place called heaven. The Word is here with me, in me, and works through me, as we have a living faith and spirituality that resides in my spirit, my land, my culture and my people.

This concept fills me with great hope and joy as it reminds me that Jesus Christ walks with me. My people are comforted by the fact that the Creator’s Spirit has and still dwells with us and we are nurtured and strengthened by the Creator Spirit.

Christmas is an opportunity for rebirth and formation of new life both physically and spiritually. There are many who feel alone at this time of the year but it should be when you feel the Creator Spirit more. You are never alone as our Creator Spirit is with us guiding, comforting, filling us with grateful hearts. Always remember this is the time of the year that we should give thanks for the blessings the Creator Spirit has given and remember that there is always someone with greater needs than your own. This Advent, consider what can we do to share the love of our Creator Spirit with those in need and to bring blessing.

May the Creator bless you and your family and keep you safe during the holiday season.

Professor Anne Pattel-Gray is Professor of Indigenous Studies and Head of the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Divinity.



## Christmas Bowl

From Act for Peace

Back in 1949, after WWII, Reverend Frank Byatt looked at his own Christmas dinner table and thought of the millions of refugees still facing starvation in war-ravaged Europe.

In that moment Frank felt compelled to act – to help those in urgent need, especially on this one great day of sharing. So he placed a ‘Bowl of Remembrance’ on his table, and asked his family and friends to put a small gift in it, to share what they had with those who were facing hunger and deprivation in other lands.

For 74 years, the Christmas Bowl has connected caring people with dedicated local partners around the world, who respond to the most urgent humanitarian needs of our time.

Right now, there are more people forcibly displaced by conflict and disaster worldwide than ever recorded – a staggering 114 million.

As each new crisis quickly fades from the headlines, many refugees are struggling to survive without the support they urgently need. Your thoughts, prayers and practical care through the Christmas Bowl could not be more vital today.

When you support the Christmas Bowl, you are standing alongside our local partners and people who have been torn apart by conflict and disaster. You can offer them hope, dignity, and a chance for a brighter tomorrow.



Thank you for being part of this important tradition and helping to create, together, a more equal and just world.

## Experiencing the divine

By Austin Phoenix

Recently, our garden was ransacked. For reasons unknown to us, our carefully-cultivated plants were ripped out of pots and thrown haphazardly over our front fence into the street, others stolen. Various things from our garden were taken, and like anyone else in the same situation would know, we're still discovering things missing. This was especially distressing for my wife Liz, for whom the garden is a big part of her life. To have something that we've worked hard for and tended with love and care, treated with such disregard brings forth strong emotions: anger, sadness, violation. A small grief amidst the recent tragedies of the world, but a sharp one for us nonetheless.



A few days later, on the 4th of November, I had the honour and joy of participating in the Christmas Pageant, sitting on a double-decker bus - some of you may be familiar

with it, having seen it on TV or in person. I can't describe the feeling of absolute joy as we rounded South Terrace into King William Street. The crowds of happy, smiling faces all waving, especially after the events of the previous few days, almost brought me to tears.

I even made my own 'cartoon' hand on a stick which I waved throughout the parade. To come together and share joy with each other is something we are called towards. To foster communities, from neighbours, to the nation, to the brother and sisterhood of humankind itself.



I don't think I exaggerate when I say I experienced God in that joyful gathering of humanity. When faced with the best and worst of mankind, it is a reminder that behind greed, behind anger, lies sadness and fear. That each and every one of us has a call to make a better world by acting with generosity, and forgiveness and grace and in doing so, draw closer with the Divine.

## Choose Joy

Robin Wall Kimmerer (contributed by Margaret Cargill)

Even a wounded world is feeding us.

Even a wounded world holds us, giving us moments of wonder and joy.

I choose joy over despair.

Not because I have my head in the sand, but because joy is what the earth gives me daily and I must return the gift.

## Reflection

The Editor with Rev David Purling

During November the Guardian reported that social cohesion in Australia is at its lowest point since records began 16 years ago. Social cohesion is measured by the Scanlon-Monash Index of Social Cohesion. It draws on a survey of more than 7,000 Australians to provide a barometer of social wellbeing and measures people's sense of belonging, worth, participation, acceptance and rejection, social inclusion, and justice.

Contributing factors to the decline in social cohesion include the COVID pandemic, people's feelings of inequality, cost of living concerns, the voice debate and rising community tensions over the war in the Middle East. Since November 2020 the index has fallen 13 points from 89 to 76. The score was set at 100 in 2008.

Just after reading this article, I received an email from David Purling with a story called "The story of two wolves."

An old Cherokee is teaching his grandson about life. "A fight is going on inside me" he told the boy. "It is a terrible fight and it is between two wolves. One is evil - he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is good - he is joy, peace, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you - and inside every person, too."



The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?" The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

The old Cherokee seems to have given us a way to deal with the loss of social cohesion - we can focus on feeding the good wolf inside us all.

*Let us hold in our hearts those who feel less safe.*

*Let us hold in our hearts those who are grieving lost friends, lost kin, lost homes, lost income, lost connection to others, lost health.*

*Let us hold in our hearts those who are angry, whose inherent worth and dignity seems up for debate ... angry that love of power seems to trump love of neighbour.*

*Help us to draw upon you, our Divine Source, as we seek to be part of a more just and safer world.*

*We pray.*

*Amen*



'With my mouth,' God says, 'I kiss my own chosen creation. I uniquely, lovingly, embrace every image I have made out of the earth's clay. With a fiery spirit I transform it into a body to serve all the world.'

**Hildegard of Bingen**

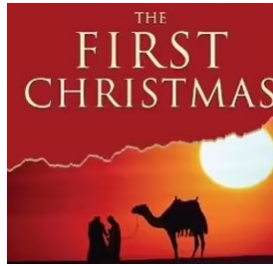
## The first Christmas: What the gospels really teach about Jesus's birth

*From the preface of a book by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan*

In contemporary western culture, and even for many Christians, the commemoration of Christmas exceeds the commemoration of Easter. Because of the importance of Christmas, how we understand the stories of Jesus's birth matters. What we think they are about – how we hear them, read them, interpret them – matters.

They touch the deepest of human yearnings: for light in the darkness, for the fulfillment of our hopes, for a different kind of world. The stories of the first Christmas are both personal and political. They speak of personal and political transformation. The personal and political meanings can be distinguished but not separated without betraying one or the other.

Set in their first-century context, they are comprehensive and passionate visions of another way of seeing life and of living our lives. They challenge the common life, the status quo, of most times and places. Even as they are tidings of comfort



and joy, they are edgy and challenging. They confront “normalcy,” what we call “the normalcy of civilization” – the way most societies, most human cultures have been and are organized.

We are not concerned with the factuality of the birth stories. Rather we focus on their meanings. What did and do these stories mean? Our task is twofold: The first is historical: to exposit these stories and their meanings in their first-century context. The second is contemporary: to treat their meanings for Christian understanding and commitment today. Both tasks are historical and theological.

The stories of the first Christmas are pervasively anti-imperial. In our setting, what does it mean to affirm with the Christmas stories that Jesus is the Son of God (and the emperor is not), that Jesus is the saviour of the world (and the emperor is not), that Jesus is Lord (and the emperor is not), that Jesus is the way to peace on earth (and the emperor is not).

The Christmas stories are about light in our darkness, the fulfillment of our deepest yearnings and the birth of Christ within us. They are about us – our hope and fears. And they are about a different kind of world. God's dream for us is not simply peace of mind but peace on earth.

**This book is available to borrow from the church library.**

## Ah, Christmas! “The most wonderful time of the year.”

*Adapted from a post by Mark Sandlin*

In reality Christmas is what we make of it. However, there are some very specific things Christians perhaps need to avoid.

For many people, Christmas is the season for mass consumerism. Regardless of where you personally think Christmas began, Christmas has slowly drifted into consumer madness. For Christians this is particularly problematic because the person we are celebrating at Christmas told us that collecting stuff here on earth is not the way to follow him.

One of the key moments in the story Christians celebrate is the moment when Jesus was almost born in the streets of Bethlehem. While the Christmas story assumes that the innkeeper told them to use the manger, the Bible says no such thing. There was no room at the inn, and for that night they were without shelter.

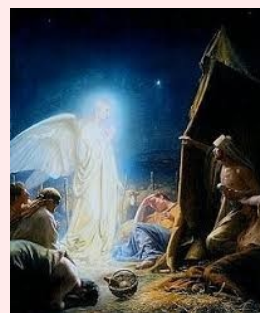
In fact throughout his ministry Jesus would spend his time as an itinerant preacher. While this time of year celebrates a homeless man, do our actions and the places we spend our money honour that? Jesus once said that when we feed the hungry we are feeding him, so what does it mean to ignore the hungry?

While we sing “We three kings from Orient are” we don't actually know how many there were and they were magi, not kings. All we know is that they were “from the east.” We do know that they were foreigners and that the king planned to kill all newborn boys in hopes of putting an end to Jesus – turning his family into refugees. Does this message call Christians to recommit to caring for immigrants and refugees?

Mary and Joseph and their family had to flee their homeland because a king used his power to squash out what he saw as a threat to his power. Maybe Christmas should cause Christians to recommit to confronting those who abuse power.



In announcing the coming of Jesus, John the Baptist told us what God was asking of us. “If you have two coats give one away.” Coats were just an example. If you have two Christmas presents give one away.



Finally, remember when you were growing up the Sunday school teacher told you Christmas was Jesus' birthday? Well, we don't actually know when Jesus was born. It was probably in the spring or summer because “the shepherds watched their flocks by night” – something which typically didn't happen much in the winter in that region. Not to

mention they were returning to Joseph's hometown for a census, which is something that would have probably been done during warmer weather.

But if we take Jesus' messages seriously, we will avoid turning Christmas into ‘the season for mass consumerism’.

*Rev. Dr. Mark Sandlin is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA)*

## The Mighty Magill Christmas Market

After a hectic first hour things quietened down to a gentle trickle of friends and shoppers until almost noon.

The success must lie in the variety and range of items available for sale and the friendly caring atmosphere that prevails.

Congratulations to all those who participated in any way.

Because of all your hard work and generosity, we raised over \$10,000 to support church programs.



## Morialta UC Friendship Group

*Previously Morialta UC Fellowship*

A modified AGM on Thursday November 16<sup>th</sup> marked the end of 67 years as “Fellowship”. The group will now meet in a more casual form and be known as Morialta UC Friendship Group.

The leader is Margaret Clogg, the Assistant Leader is Ruth Pitt, the Recorder is Arlene Lomman and the Treasurer is also Arlene. The Committee members are Margaret Whibley, Joan Wagner and Ray Clogg. Ray is also the Tech Support person and Mandy Wood has taken on the position of morning tea co-ordinator.

After a lovely morning tea, we watched a collage of very interesting video clips put together by Ruth Pitt, some of which were absolutely amazing.

The average attendance for 2023 was 18.

Our final outing for the year was Christmas Luncheon at the Highlander Hotel, Gilles Plains.

*Margaret Clogg*

## A Christmas carol, to the tune of Ode to joy, written by Beryl Foreman (past member of Kensington Gardens UC)

*Contributed by Julie Lomman*

Roses red and blue hydrangeas all abloom at Christmas time.  
Christmas trees and jacarandas all abloom at Christmas time.  
*Let us celebrate this season of the coming of our Lord;  
Light and life and joy he brings us, to us all at Christmas time.*

See the fruit trees' boughs a-laden, all a-ripe at Christmas time;  
Apricots, plums, peaches, cherries, all a-ripe at Christmas time.  
*Let us celebrate this season of the coming of our Lord;  
Light and life and joy he brings us, to us all at Christmas time.*

In the homes and on the beaches people meet at Christmas time.  
In the parks and in the churches people meet at Christmas time.  
*Let us celebrate this season of the coming of our Lord;  
Light and life and joy he brings us, to us all at Christmas time.*

## Christmas post

Many people complain about the Christmas post. Too slow, too unreliable, too expensive...

But when Mildred went to the post office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards, the postal clerk asked her “What denomination do you want?”

“That’s political correctness gone mad”, said Mildred. “Has it come to this?”

“You’d better give me a book of Catholic, a book of Uniting, a book of Ecumenism and a book of ‘No religion’ please.”



## A story of legends – the Christmas tree

Adapted from an article by James A. T. Lancaster Lecturer in Western Religious Studies University of Queensland, published in the Conversation

The Christmas tree is a modern invention. Although there are many trees in the Bible – there is no Christmas tree.

While it might be tempting to draw connections between the Christmas tree and pagan festivals, the Christmas tree is completely unrelated.

The Christmas tree is a relatively new tradition, originating as a tradition in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Strasbourg. The citizens of Strasbourg included a tree as part of a judgement tradition on Christmas day. Children would be judged by their parents. If good, bonbons would be left under a tree. If bad, there would be no bonbons – a hint of what was to come on Judgement Day.

Also the story that Martin Luther was overwhelmed by the beauty of a snow-covered tree, while contemplating the infant Christ, is apocryphal. The Christmas Tree did not become popular in Germany until the 1830s, after it began to gain popularity in America. German merchants introduced it in Manchester around the same time the courts of George III and William IV introduced it to British aristocracy. It was popularised in Britain, when Prince Albert set up a Christmas tree at Windsor in 1840.

The Christmas tree, with gifts under it, is derived from America. It was adopted as an attempt to remove the gross debauchery of the season. Back then Christmas was celebrated as a carnival, in which revellers – usually the poor and working classes – would parade around towns, knocking on the doors of the wealthy and demanding to be feasted or given drink. This practice, “wassailing”, evolved into drunkenness, vandalism and lewd acts.

It was thought that this rowdiness would be mitigated by the indoor, child-friendly Christmas tree around which the middle-class family would gather.



Although adopted to mitigate the excesses, the Christmas tree was popularised by merchants when they recognised the potential of the new indoor festivities. So the gross over-indulgence of Christmases past made a comeback in a new, middle-class way with the giving of gifts.

Families learned about the tradition of Christmas Trees from books and parents were led to believe placing gifts under the Christmas tree was a ritual as old as the biblical magi, with their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But the Christmas tree, largely a secular symbol of the season, owes its success to the forces of a consumerist economy.



## The end of an era for ecumenism I n South Australia

The board of Churches Together South Australia (CTSA) has endorsed a consensus decision by CTSA member church leaders/delegates to wind-up CTSA and to deliver some of its works differently.

This does not mean that ecumenism in South Australia is being wound up, only the current structure relied upon by member churches to realise their deep responsiveness to the prayer of Jesus Christ, ‘that they may all be one’ (John 17.21).

While CTSA member church leaders/delegates have expressed a strong commitment to continuing ecumenical endeavours, they acknowledged serious, ongoing financial difficulties faced by CTSA.

Their reluctant decision was made in response to an independent professional review of the sustainability of CTSA conducted by Not For Profit Accounting Services (NFPAS) in September 2023.

The Board acknowledged the fine, passionate work of Rev Anne Hewitt, CTSA Executive Director; and of Ms Emma Stephenson, CTSA Personal Assistant/Office Manager over the last 4 years or so. It also acknowledges the many years of service and good works overseen by CTSA’s predecessor, South Australian Council of Churches Inc.

This decision will be implemented immediately, avoiding the risk of involuntary administration. Most importantly, it means that CTSA staff will be paid their full entitlements and compensated for the premature end of their employment.

The Board is in discussion with Leaders of Christian Churches South Australia (LoCCSA) regarding the handover of appropriate, ongoing activities of CTSA and is also leading the coordination of substantial wind-up processes.

*Peace is not  
something you wish for.  
It's something you do,  
something you are,  
and something you give away.*  
*John Lennon*



## Planet earth and the sun in Mount Lofty Botanic Garden

Photos by David Purling

### Planet Earth

This earth is our home

A small blue marble in a vast space of nothing

We must give it what it needs to flourish

So that it can do the same for us.



### The Sun

Life on earth is only possible because of stars.

Almost every element on earth was made inside a star.

We feed off the energy provided by our star, the sun.

And one distant day we will be consumed by it.

## Advent practices: Water's wisdom

Adapted from a post on Patheos by Christine Valters Paintner

*"The bass and trout hiding in the deep pools of the river are canonized by their beauty and their strength. The lakes hidden among the hills are saints, and the sea too is a saint who praises God without interruption in her majestic dance."*

Thomas Merton



Isaiah celebrates water's life-giving qualities: "The desert and the parched land will exult; the steppe will rejoice and bloom. They will bloom with abundant flowers, and rejoice with joyful song."

Hildegard of Bingen coined the term *viriditas* to describe the "greening power of God." She applies this word to the moistness of the earth as well as the soul. Her emphasis on greenness symbolizes the inner dynamism of life in all its burgeoning growth, vibrancy, freshness, and fecundity as emanating from the life-creating power of God. It expresses her conviction of God as the source, sustainer, and energizer of all life.

In the season of Advent we are called to tend to the places in our own lives where we need to invite in greater greenness and life-giving waters to nourish us.

During Advent, as we wait with anticipation for the celebration of "a new birth", we are called to be patient, to honour the slow unfolding of creation and of our own lives. "Be patient, brothers and sisters" writes James. Rather than force life into our own plans and expectations, can we remain open-hearted, and listen for the invitation of water's gifts to us? The process of birthing takes nine long months in the

## I sometimes forget

By Hafez

My mind is too busy ... I sometimes forget that I was created for joy.

My heart is too heavy for me to remember that I have been called to dance ... the sacred dance of life.

I was created to smile ... to Love ... to be lifted up ... and to lift others up.

O Sacred One ... untangle my feet from all that ensnares. Free my soul ... that we might dance ... and that our dancing might be contagious.

~Hafiz – Khwāje Shams-od-Dīn Moḥammad Ḥāfeẓ-e Shirāzī (Persian). Hafez 'the memorizer; the safe keeper' lived from 1325–1390. He was a Persian lyric poet whose collected works are regarded by many Iranians as one of the highest pinnacles of Persian literature.

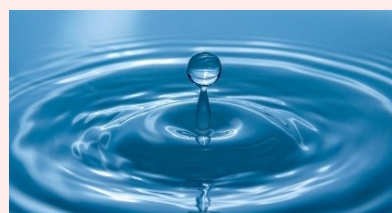
***"Christmas is a season  
not only of rejoicing  
but of reflection."  
Winston Churchill***

sacred holding space of the womb's water. Where are we tempted to rush things in our own lives that require still more tending, more waiting, and more patience?

In Cherokee tradition, water is associated with the season of autumn and the hour of dusk. Water invites us to enter life's flow and to honour the cycles and rhythms of life. In autumn as the darkness continues to grow, we are also invited to become present to our own mortality. The element of water reminds us to honour our own rhythms of rising and falling and in this coming season to allow time for rest and hibernation.

There is a story from the Russian Orthodox tradition where a young man goes to Fr. Seraphim to learn how to pray. He is sent out to the ocean to learn the wisdom of ebbing and flowing. He learns to synchronize his breath with the "great breathing rhythm of the waves." As he floats on the sea he also discovers the great calmness of the sea below its undulating surface, and he learns to hold awareness of his own distinct self without being carried away by the rhythm of breathing.

The element of water offers wisdom for your journey. This Advent, listen for how the presence of the sacred is pulsing through this divine gift of love, and the flow of your life.



Christine Valters Paintner is the online Abbess at [www.AbbeyoftheArts.com](http://www.AbbeyoftheArts.com), a virtual monastery

## Another wedding!

Steve and Helena were delighted to be a part of the wedding of their older son, Adam, and Emily recently in the Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, south of Melbourne. They shared the occasion with younger son, Ian, and his partner Brenda, and Helena's sister, Angela, who travelled here from England for the occasion.



## A quilt for Cynthia

A quilt prepared by Judith was presented to Cynthia in recognition of her ongoing faithful work with the Pastoral Care team.

Cynthia designs and sends beautiful, personalised cards to congregation members who are experiencing difficult circumstances due to ill health, need for care and other life challenges.



Cynthia undertakes this ministry with personal care and understanding, in spite of the personal challenges that she deals with in her own life.

Thank you Cynthia for your ongoing thoughtfulness and care for the folks at Morialta!

## The Transcendent is born

Adapted from an article by Jim Rigby published in @KissingFishBook

For me "God" is a symbol of whatever it is that transcends space and time.

The Hebrew scriptures seems very protective of the transcendental nature of the symbol they used for "God." Moses hears a voice coming through a burning bush. Was it a magic bush, or was Moses realizing something fundamental about all life?

The meaning of the divine name given at the burning bush is some form of the verb "to be." One way to understand the symbol "God" is as a reminder that we are expressions of a depth we cannot fathom, we are tied together with a bond larger than we can compass, and we, as humankind, are the "faces" of that mysterious cosmic creativity.

It's Christmas season and, once again, countless sermons will tell the story of a male deity ... and an earth woman chosen because her virginity made her pure enough to give birth to the special baby.

Every time the church addresses God as "He", are we telling our children that little boys look more like God than the little girls? We may not mean to say that, but look at how the church has treated women through the ages.

One way to understand the Christmas story is as a symbol of how the transcendent is born through all of our concrete lives. The symbol "God" cannot lead us to universal love if we imagine that God looks more like some of us than others.

Symbols begin as childlike tales but they are intended to help us grow until we can love with all of our hearts, all of our minds and all of our ethical responsibility. Here are a few litmus tests for whether our religious symbols honour transcendence.

- The transcendent cannot be reduced to concrete form.
- The transcendent does not need to have a gender.
- The transcendent does not come and go.
- The transcendent may be deeper than human thought, but it embraces the best of human reason and science. It does not need to deny ANYTHING that is demonstrably true
- The transcendent is not more like some of us than others.
- The transcendent does not play favourites.

Finally, we cannot know what the transcendent is in itself, but our concrete lives are enriched when we remember we are expressions of a transcendent depth we cannot fathom, we are parts of a transcendent breadth we cannot compass, and we are addressed by transcendent patterns more intimate than we can fully comprehend."



Jim Rigby is Minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Austin Texas.

## A dog or a pig?

From the Editor

Isabella wanted a dog for Christmas. She had asked Santa at the mall, and she even put it on her wish list. When Christmas came, her mother handed her a huge box with holes.

Excited, Isabella ripped open the box, only to be disappointed to find a little potbelly pig.

The disappointed little girl asked her mother, "Why did Santa get me a pig?" From the kitchen, her dad yelled, "Oh, that's my fault, I asked Santa for a Christmas ham."



**Worship with us  
This Advent and Christmas!**

**Sunday 3 December 10.00am**  
"Let it go"

**Sunday 10 December 10.00am**  
"Changing your mind"

**Sunday 17 December 10.00am**  
"Pointing to the light"

**Monday 18 December 7.30pm**  
Blue Christmas, service of healing and hope

**Sunday 24 December 10.00am**  
"Listening"

**Sunday 24 December 7.00pm**  
"Preparing for the extraordinary"

**Monday 25 December 9.00am**  
"God in us"

***Everyone welcome at all our services!***



This Christmas  
may you be filled with  
the wonder of Mary,  
the obedience of Joseph,  
the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the determination of the magi,  
and the peace of the Christ child.

**God and sinners dressed in style**

A class of six-year-olds were singing "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing" at a Christmas concert. The line "God and sinners reconciled" was a tricky one for this age group.

One little boy, with a voice that completely drowned out the rest of the choir, happily belted out, "God and sinners dressed in style!"



**Advent at Morialta UC 2023**



**A reflection by Matthew Syrdal**

Advent is myth-time. A time to wander and wonder, to remember as a people all we have lost. All that glances back at us, eyes glimmering across the circle of light we now stand in. Darkness is a kind of memory that reaches down – in through the feeling function. It holds encoded the memory of time and origins.

Advent is womb-time – what is coming we cannot see but only feel. But one thing is for certain it is here, within and among, watching just beyond the ring of firelight. The words can become our words, our love-prayer. If we have the courage to seek the One beyond the fire circle.

Advent is a season to let ourselves be held in the peculiar way that only darkness can do. It is an ancient song sung in the meandering hollows and wells of fallow time.

"And it is possible: its great Power is breaking into my body. I have faith in the night."

Matthew Syrdal, M.Div., is a pastor in the Denver area and founder of Church of Lost Walls, and co-founder of Seminary of the Wild.



**Because of us**

This morning I learned the English word 'gauze' – finely woven medical cloth.

It came from the Arabic word Ghazza because Gazans have been skilled weavers for centuries.

I wondered then how many wounds have been dressed because of them and how many of their wounds have been left open because of us.

Em Berry @skinhungry