

# Beyond 2020 Vision

A Publication of Morialta Uniting Church

November 2024

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## Welcome to our November edition

Colin Cargill, Editor and Helena Begg, Publisher

Our lead article is an 'Advent Reflection' adapted from an article by the Rev Donald Brown – based on an article by Professor Vance Morgan. As the writer says "Advent is a season of hope and expectation, items that are in noticeably short supply these days."

We share a message of appreciation that we have received from AKWAK (Aussies Knitting for War-Affected Kids), who have been using our Kooka rooms and shed for sorting, packing and storing items they have collected to send to refugee children in north west Syria.

You will also find the final instalment of Ruth Pitt's memoir of her time nursing in PNG and we look ahead to our Merry Magill Christmas Market, which is just around the corner!

We also include other reflections and poems and the usual mix of articles covering the life of MUC, the UCA, the wider church and the community.

**The deadline for the next Vision will be 30<sup>th</sup> November.** Either drop copy in to the office or call/email Colin on 0427 122 106 or [snout-n-about@bigpond.com](mailto:snout-n-about@bigpond.com)

Go well.

## Advent Reflection

Adapted from a reflection by the Rev Donald Brown  
– based on an article by Professor Vance Morgan

Advent is the first season of the liturgical year. It is a season of hope and expectation, items that are in noticeably short supply these days. A reading from Isaiah 65:17 for Advent says: "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth."

Vance writes: "... in the religious world of my youth, we understood such remarkable texts to be referring to a world to come, one that would be established after Jesus came back and literally established heaven on earth. But I'm convinced that the most important application of texts such as these is not waiting for a future world that is better than this one, but taking responsibility for seeking and striving to create that world now." In the gospels, Jesus regularly tells those listening that the kingdom of heaven is "within" and "among" us. As people of faith we are not just called to recite the line from the Lord's Prayer asking that "thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" as if this is someone else's task, but to ask what would such a reality look like?

Imagine a world in which all persons have their basic needs met, where no one suffers or dies from lack of sufficient food and shelter, or adequate health care. Imagine a world of sustainability and empowerment; a world in which adequate structures and systems are in place that will allow people to be self-sustaining and supporting; a world in which the poor are not exploited by the rich, and the powerless are not exploited by the powerful.

If salvation is about liberating the oppressed, releasing the prisoners, and lifting up the downtrodden – which Jesus continually insists that it is – then given that we read about the oppressed, the captive, and the disenfranchised every day, it is time to get to work. Isaiah's prophetic vision may be of the future, but it is of a future that we are called to bring into the present.

Isaiah 61 is another powerful text: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, Because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, ... to comfort all who mourn, ... to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning ... that they may be called trees of righteousness, ... that He may be glorified."

According to Luke's gospel, Jesus read this passage on a Sabbath day in the Nazareth synagogue shortly after spending forty days of temptation in the desert, ending his reading with "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." It was his official coming-out party, his "mission statement." He was almost killed on the spot for claiming to be the Messiah.

The stakes are high when we take the good news seriously. Seeking to create a better, more just world is always a threat to those most invested in resisting change. But if we are serious about following Jesus, we also have to be serious about our role in the divine economy. If the kingdom is to be established, we don't get to push it off to some future world to come. It's time to get to work.

Rev Donald Brown was a pastor in the African Methodist Episcopal Church for 40 years



## Merry Magill Market 16<sup>th</sup> November 9am to noon

As you read this the market is almost here and stallholders are well advanced in their plans and preparation. If you still haven't got a job on market day please talk to Helena and she will find you one!

Small flyers are available in the foyer – please take some and share them with your friends and neighbours.

Food labels are also available – please remember that all food items for sale must be pre-packaged and labelled with the ingredients and date of preparation. Please keep food donations at home until the day before the market.

Plants are welcome for sale but please keep them at home until as late as possible so that they don't need too much care at the church, especially if the weather is hot.

Donations of books, DVDs and jigsaw puzzles in good condition can be left in the library or the blue room – remember that we do not wish to receive textbooks, encyclopedias or magazines, and can only take relatively new cookbooks, please.



## Thank you!

Many thanks to all who turned up for the working bee on a warm Saturday at the beginning of November, to prepare for our market.

Lots of old furniture and other junk was hauled out of the shed into a skip for removal.

The landscaping at the front was cut back to provide a safer area around the front of the church, particularly at night.

Weeding and other jobs were also completed around the property and then a refreshing morning tea was enjoyed by all!



## Ode to Volunteers

*From The Aylesbury Methodist Church Link  
contributed by Judith Purling*

Many will be shocked to find,  
When the day of judgment nears,  
That there is a special place  
In heaven set aside for volunteers.  
Furnished with big recliners,  
Satin couches and footstools,  
Where there are no committees,  
Chairman, Group leader, or car pools.  
No eager team that needs a coach,  
No bazaar or cake sale;  
There will be nothing to staple,  
Not one thing to fold or mail.  
Telephone lists will be outlawed,  
But a finger snap will bring  
Cool drinks, gourmet dinners,  
And rare treats fit for a king.  
You ask, "Who'll serve these privileged few  
And work for all they're worth?"  
Why - all those who reaped the benefits,  
And not once volunteered on earth!!

## Recognition of sixty years of ordination

Both Rev Doug Hosking and Rev Dr Jonathan Barker received congratulations and certificates of sixty years of ordination during the recent Synod meeting.

What an amazing contribution from both men who have also served MUC faithfully during their ministry!



## Church Council news – End of October 2024 – PLEASE READ!

- First, we are delighted to welcome Rev. Dr. Jonathan Barker from Sunday 3 November as our 0.5 Supply Minister. We are looking forward to working with Jonathan over the coming months!
- We have nothing to report from the Joint Nominating Committee regarding a permanent placement, but work continues on the search.
- Please remember to reserve the date of the next Congregation Meeting – Sunday 1 December – when we will consider the budget for 2025 and other important items!

- Safe Church! New large-format posters have been created which outline the ten important principles of the Uniting Church's Safe Church policy. One poster is displayed in the hall, and the other in the Kooka Room, so that groups hiring our premises can be fully aware of this important information as well.

*For more information on any of these items, please ask any member of Council: Margaret Cargill, Rhonda Amber, Carole Lyons, Chris Ayles, Helena Begg or John Secombe.*



### Tribute and benefit concert for Doug Simper

Sunday 3pm, December 1st, 2024 at Church of the Trinity, 318 Goodwood Road, Clarence Park

#### Featuring:

- Sevenfold** - Six-piece indie band
- Rod Boucher** with Buffalo Drive
- Fossils** with Peter Combe OAM, multi-ARIA Award winner
- Richard Palmer and Co.** - 3-piece indie band
- Leigh Newton** - singer/songwriter
- Andrew Dutney** - singer/songwriter
- Melinda Steel** performing some of Doug's piano pieces
- Simperly Singing** - vocal ensemble singing some of Doug's songs
- Holy Horns** - brass ensemble led by Andrew Newhouse
- Minim** - women's choir from Brougham Place Uniting Church

This is an opportunity to celebrate and honour Doug's contribution to music in Australia. He is well known for his contemporary church songs, such as 'Turning point of time', 'Spirit of peace' and 'Lord of our days'.

Doug is returning to Adelaide for his 80th birthday in early December. He increasingly suffers from a debilitating condition affecting his movement, so this will be the last time that he visits Adelaide.

Wine will be available before the show and during the intermission.

Tickets: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1296779>

### Jesu lover of my soul

*From stories of 'Famous Hymns' by G.A. Leask, MA  
– first published 1913 – loaned by Julie Lomman*

Of this hymn, regarded as Charles Wesley's masterpiece, Henry Ward Beecher said: "I would rather have written this hymn than to have the fame of all the kings that ever sat on the earth." It is universally acknowledged to be the finest heart hymn in the English language.

Various stories have grown up to account for its origin, but one of these accounts has so much likelihood that many have no doubt in accepting it. Charles Wesley was standing one day on a cliff looking out over the sea. As he stood gazing at the broad expanse of waters beneath him, he was startled by an exhausted sea-bird striking against his breast and clinging to his garments. He took the wing-wearied and trembling bird in his hands and placed it in his bosom for warmth and rest. As he did so, he thought of the weary soul finding refuge in the Saviour's bosom from the storms of the sea of life.

Then as he lifted up his eyes he saw huge waves foaming along the shore, so wild and fierce that no swimmer could live in them. Gazing farther, he espied a ship sailing quietly and joyously in calm waters. This reminded him of the fears which so often come to men by "the nearer waters" of their immediate troubles. Thus, with the sea-bird safe and warm in his bosom, he composed mentally the well-known hymn:

*Jesu, Lover of my soul,  
Let me to Thy bosom fly,  
While the nearer waters roll,  
While the tempest still is high:  
Hide me, O my Saviour, hide,  
Till the storm of life is past;  
Safe into the haven guide,  
O receive my soul at last!*



## Thanks and appreciation from AKWAK

I write to the Council with our thanks and deep appreciation for another year of such kind and generous support for Aussies Knitting for War-Affected Kids (AKWAK).

For 9 months of the year we have people and community groups all over the country beavering away making beautiful clothes and buying toys, enrichment items, school supplies, shoes and blankets for refugee children in NW Syria. In the other 3 months it comes flooding to us here in Adelaide and to our second packing location in Beechworth Victoria and we are tasked with sorting, bagging, supplementing and packing a huge number of contributions. Our final figures for this year are yet to land, but we know that the ballpark figure for what we've processed between our two locations this year is around 110,000 items for the children.

Putting these numbers into context, this translates into support for every child in an entire large school, several mother/baby clinics and neo-natal hospitals and about 5 large IDP (internally displaced persons) camps. The number of children directly supported is between 2,000 - 3,000 and other aid flows through to families. As the volume numbers would indicate, there is nothing token about our aid. Clothing packs are filled to the brim with handmade and bought clothes to kit a child out for an entire growing year. They each receive stationery items and school supplies, and a very generous 'enrichment' pack (toys, games, sports items, puzzles,

comfort toys) that will aid in stimulating their growth and development. This component of aid is very important. The aid shortage is so severe that not even the bare minimum clothes make it to most children, let alone that they would receive items that provide for them the joys and benefits of play and development. It is our privilege to help fill that gap. They also receive shoes and gum boots and blankets. We also send comprehensive supplies to the school and the aid we send to the neo-natal clinics is life-saving.

The Morialta Church Council contributes substantially to these outcomes and we thank you very much for that and the role you play in achieving them. It is not to overstate matters to say that without the Council's incredibly generous support, providing us with the use of both the back room at Morialta and the shed to store and process all the aid flooding in, we would not be able to support the children at anything like the level we do.



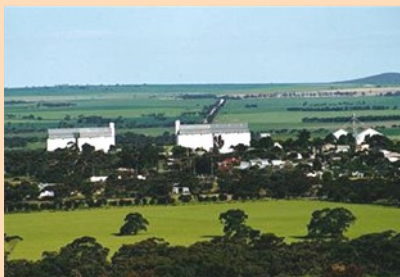
Thank you so very much for doing this for the children in such dire need by supporting us the way you do. We also thank you very much for your patience with all our comings and goings and our big presence in the back room for 3 months of the year.

With sincere thanks and our kindest regards,

Liz Lange, Akwak Founder



## News from Kimba



Kimba UC celebrated 100 years of worship on their piece of ground in High St Kimba on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October. For such a milestone, they were able to entice Eric and Joan Kirkham back to lead the worship.

Our church has been a symbol of the hope, love and generosity that so many people have given to the community. We celebrate the actions of the people, those whose determination made the projects happen. Those who have committed to providing music, singing, worship, hospitality and working bees. Those who visit and those who listen.

As we enter this chapter, sharing worship with Morialta, we want you to know that the landscape is changing. The warmer temperatures have ripened many of the crops and there are now only a few green patches amongst them. While many

have recorded well below average rainfall, it is quite amazing to see the growth we have achieved. This comes largely on the back of good summer weed control which was able to conserve moisture that fell around Christmas last year.

The afternoons are quite warm but still cool at night and we have had a few thunderstorms. While some were affected by hail, in general the rain was welcomed.

At the Wimala Presbytery meeting I indicated we were keen to keep your church in the loop, so I couldn't let our excitement at this event go, not shared. I did hear a whisper that you may have someone on supply ministry for six months.

Wishing your church all the best for the coming months.

On behalf of the Kimba congregation.

Brett Francis, Chairperson Kimba UC

*Morialta UC sends congratulations and warm wishes to our friends in Kimba on their centenary celebrations.*



## Welcome to the world!

Congratulations to Lauren and Matthew on the birth of Amelia Claire on 26 October. The first granddaughter for Craig and Sharon.

## A nurse's memories of her time in PNG

*Adapted from a memoir by Ruth Pitt (nee Lewis) - Final Episode*

While on leave Ruth married John Pitt (the Didiman) and of course had to resign. Her first marital home was at Sarakolok, West New Britain where there was a kerosene fridge, a port-a-gas stove, twin tub washing machine but no power. Ruth's parents donated a 240-volt petrol generator which had to be pull-started (like a lawnmower) to use the washing machine or sewing machine. Pressure lamps were used at night.

In preparation for independence, Australia was encouraging a cash economy. Settlers were brought from different overcrowded areas of the country with a Development Bank (World Bank) loan, to allotted blocks which had been surveyed along roads and the large trees felled. The men had to build a simple wooden house (materials supplied) and plant young oil palms amongst the felled timber and make a food garden, supervised by husband John and local field officers. In the community centre was a school, trade store, market, oval, cemetery and housing for local teachers, other workers and the Pitts.

In August 1970 John was transferred to Buvussi to start a new 600 block settlement. The access road was often blocked by fallen trees or very slippery. When Ruth was pregnant she flew to Rabaul for checks. On the last flight she required a doctor's letter to reassure the airline the birth (due a week later) would not occur on the flight. John flew to join her on Good Friday, but flying conditions were such he arrived the following morning. However Warwick arrived safely in the care of Sister Bernadette who had been in the Labour ward for 32 years.

Things did not go well and the settlers became angry because low palm oil prices meant that they had less than expected after loan repayments were deducted. So the family was moved to Rabaul for safety. They then moved to Kavieng but son Warwick had constant ear infections, so Ruth flew to Melbourne for specialist treatment and surgery.

Meanwhile John had been transferred to Buin, the southernmost town of Bougainville Island. His job was to supervise a village cattle project and the Pitts lived on the DASF station just out of town. There was a large Brahman bull which ignored fences and it would wake the family in the mornings by rubbing its flanks on the house support post under the bedroom. One of many dramas occurred when 22 children (plus mothers) attended Warwick's 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday party in the garden. Ruth was upstairs attending to Warwick when she heard cries for "help" – the bull had come for his usual drink at Warwick's little pool, scattering everyone. Although Ruth removed him, the guests won't forget that party.

There were 6 rivers between Buin and Kieta, the main town of the region. So travel could be exciting. On one trip the Toyota bogged in a hole in the road through the Mivo River and on another occasion their vehicle lost traction crossing a river while driving to Kieta. They were swept downstream but the wheels caught the bank and they were able to exit the river. Living close to a village they could often hear the log drums beating all night if there was a local death.

The Pitts finally returned to Australia in November 1973. But Ruth regards the 6 years she spent in PNG as a great and enjoyable experience. She still loves to reminisce with her life-long friends she met there.

*A copy of the full memoir with photos is available on request.*



Ruth with a happy pikinini



The Pitts' Buvussi home



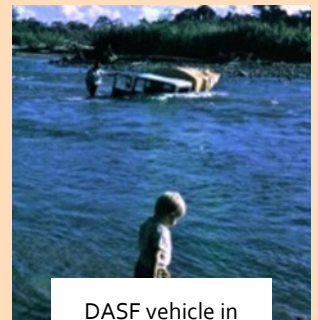
The pool at Buin



Road to Buvussi blocked



Ruth with pig-tailed dandy



DASF vehicle in the Mivo River



### Jan Thornton joins the OBE Club

Thirty-five years ago as new migrants to Australia we took our 3 daughters on an unforgettable sailing holiday to the Whitsundays. A lot of water has “passed under the bridge” since then and it was with some amazement, I realised, my 80th birthday was on the horizon. Now – I love giving birthday parties for other people, but not myself! Determined to give me a surprise holiday in lieu of a “birthday bash,” John organised a break in Darwin for the two of us – and it couldn’t have been better. Having lived for some years in Malaysia, we attuned pretty quickly to the humidity. Officially it was “rainy season”, but we had blue skies all the while we there. We did and saw everything we wanted to see and do, including sitting

by the swimming pool with a good book – and doing nothing! On the last day John told me he was taking me somewhere for a birthday surprise and we would be leaving promptly at 4.30pm for a gentle, evening sail for me to witness the uniquely, wonderful Darwin sunset. We were plied with non-stop gourmet food, washed down with champagne – from a glass that was always full. It was a good indication of how hedonists enjoy themselves – and for a short time, those hedonists were us. The trip brought back memories of the thrill we felt all those years ago, at being part of a new Antipodean life. Photographs are wonderful, tangible mementos of landmark moments in our lives.

Life is strewn with milestones when we have to make important decisions – and when John and I decided to take a chance on combining our very different lives – it was one of our better milestones. The years we live aren’t important - it’s the memories of what we’ve done with those years, that last when we are gone. But the photographs are a great help!!

*Congratulations on your 80th birthday, Jan!*

### The Adelaide Male Voice Choir concert

“What a wonderful and enjoyable afternoon of music and fun” was the general consensus following the concert by the Adelaide Male Voice Choir on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October.

The choir is now in its 140<sup>th</sup> year and their singing has certainly aged well. The precision and melody of the voices, a solo piano recital and the feeling of celebration made for a wonderful afternoon. Our thanks to the President Peter Schulze and Music Director Jonathan Leske and the accompanist Edward (Ed) Kriek. For many his solo piano piece was the highlight of the afternoon.

The concert was followed by a delicious afternoon tea with scones, jam and cream, and tea or coffee in the hall. Some guests were still enjoying the conversation late into the afternoon – narrowly avoiding being stacked up with the chairs.

Several items were donated for the raffle including a magnificent music-themed quilt made by Judith Purling.

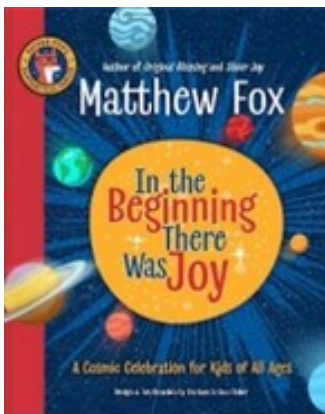
The Community Building and Fund-Raising Committee thank everyone involved in the organisation of the event and who helped on the day.

The total from ticket sales was \$1,312 which was shared with AMVC. The raffle raised a further \$161.

For those who missed it, we can only say how sad we are that you missed such an enjoyable musical afternoon.



### Book Review: In the beginning there was joy: A cosmic celebration for kids of all ages, by Matthew Fox



‘In the beginning there was joy’ is a book for all ages – including grandchildren. It is the first book in Father Fox’s Fantastical Fables series. It tells the story of the big bang and how humans fit into the awesome, fantastical, cosmic picture! It is also beautifully illustrated and weaves together modern science and classic spirituality in an entertaining format to illustrate important truths to readers aged 4 and up. With artwork curated from illustrators around the world, this book expresses the joy and wonder of all peoples and cultures, planting seeds of respect, cooperation and hope to work together for the healing of our planet.

Fox introduces ideas from Creation Spirituality to kids of all ages. Parents and grandparents will also enjoy these thought-provoking, rhyming stories. He also plants seeds of hope and inspiration for the next generation of nature lovers and eco-activists in this modern new series.

Father Fox’s Fantastical Fables are designed to fill hearts with love, and minds with reverence for all of creation. An ideal gift for children and young people for Christmas.

### What is breakable?

There was a very gracious lady who was mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country.

“Is there anything breakable in here?” asked the post office official.

“Only the Ten Commandments.” answered the lady!

## Friendship Group

At the October meeting of the Friendship Group, Rhonda and Arlene brought lots of Christmas bits and pieces so that members could decorate wreaths for Christmas, which, as we know, is not far away.

As you can see from the photo, the finished articles were very fancy and everyone was really pleased with them.

Next meeting is our AGM to “elect” next year’s leaders. This will be followed by a travel talk by Margaret Cargill entitled “Margaret’s 75th Birthday tour of Europe”, which sounds really interesting. All are welcome at 10am for a cuppa and fellowship followed by the short meeting and the talk.



A sample of the little Christmas wreaths that were made at Friendship Club at the November meeting.

## Plea to Australian drivers over 65

Adapted from an article by Courtney Greatrex, published in Yahoo News



Recent data shows over a quarter of incidents that resulted in insurance claims were attributed to drivers over 65.

The most common type of collision over all age groups was found to be nose-to-tail crashes at 26 per cent, and drivers aged 65 years and over are most likely to be in the driver’s seat. This data tends to suggest that drivers may have a tendency for tailgating or being impatient and easily distracted when behind the wheel – all things that should not be happening.

The startling statistic comes from a study that looked at 4.3 million motor claims between 2014 and 2023. It’s prompted the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) to remind older drivers they must understand their responsibility to themselves and other road users. The law and ethics say that if we are a driver, we need to be asking ourselves every time we get behind the wheel ‘Am I safe to do this?’

Older drivers in South Australia must complete self-assessments and if necessary they must have a medical examination. However, we may pass a test with our GP, but even so, every time we drive we need to ask ourselves; ‘Can I really do this?’

We are all personally responsible for the actions that we take and if we drive a car, we need to be certain that we are fit enough to drive. If we are over 65, perhaps we should be asking our GP to help us answer that question.

It doesn’t mean that once we become 65 we will automatically be unable to drive. But ageing does affect strength, dexterity, reaction times, vision, hearing and cognitive processing. The longer we live, the more likely we are to have chronic illnesses and the majority of Australians live with at least one chronic disease, if not more. Many medications we take also have a warning about operating machinery!

Authorities encourage everyone behind the wheel to follow all road rules, stick to the speed limit, avoid distractions like mobile phones and remain patient in heavy traffic. Maybe as we age we need to leave extra room between us and the vehicle in front!



## You’re wrong but here’s why you keep insisting you’re right

Adapted from an article in Science by Christie Wilcox

You’ve probably been wrong before and didn’t know it. That’s because we tend to overestimate our grasp of information necessary for decision making.

Scientists asked more than 1200 people to read a story where a school system had to decide how to handle dwindling water resources. Two groups of about 500 people received the arguments either for or against merging two schools; the remaining people (the control group) received all of the arguments for and against the merger.

When asked their opinions on what should be done, the one-sided story readers agreed with what they’d been told – and they were more confident in their conclusion than the control group. That is, until they were asked to read the other side’s arguments. When half of each group read the other arguments, they often changed their minds and reported less confidence in their ability to make a good decision.

So it seems that even if people are frequently confident in wrong beliefs, they are at least potentially open to change.

## Consider this remarkable fact

In the sermon on the mount, there is not a single word about what to believe, only words about what to do and how to be. By the time the Nicene Creed was written, only three centuries later, there was not a single word in it about what to do and how to be – only words about what to believe.

Robin R Meyers – *Saving God from Religion – A minister’s search for God in a sceptical age*

## World humanitarians

Since the death of an Australian humanitarian worker, there have been calls to ensure the safety of these selfless volunteers. But who exactly are the humanitarians that are honoured on World Humanitarian Day?

The vast majority of humanitarian workers are locals and not fly-in aid 'saviours.' This makes complete sense. Locals know the language, they know their way around the country, they have the relationships to make things happen, and they know where and who to go to, for what. Perhaps most importantly they know the culture and that really matters, even in an emergency.

Humanitarian workers are professionals ... not gung-ho, get out there and get-aid-in whatever it takes do-gooders. Humanitarians follow well-established principles based upon years of experience and learning. One key principle is treating people with impartiality. That means giving humanitarian assistance wherever it is needed and whatever someone's race, creed, nationality or religion.

Aid workers must often bite their lips even when their hearts cry out for justice. In the midst of bombings, attacks on children, and the killing of civilians, humanitarian workers have to stay neutral despite desperately wanting to speak out. Neutrality is a principle enshrined in the Red Cross Code of Conduct, a code that almost all large humanitarian agencies subscribe to. An aid worker sees an atrocity. They know who did it, but they can't publicly name who was to blame.

Aid work is dangerous but it is national humanitarian workers – as opposed to internationals – who bear the brunt of the killings, woundings and kidnappings suffered while working. Despite attempts to remain neutral, aid workers are targeted, kidnapped, blown up in roadside bombs, killed by robbers, raped and sexually abused.

Humanitarian work is becoming more and more complex and dynamic. The majority of aid agency responses in the past were focused on sudden scale ups of emergency aid to drought (the Ethiopian famine of the mid 1980s), conflict (the Rwandan genocide), quakes (the 2004 Asian tsunami and the 2009 Haiti earthquake), but in recent years climate change is creating increasing cycles of drought, more erratic weather patterns and intersecting with conflict in ways that are increasing vulnerability for the very poorest nations

The contribution of aid workers in seeking to alleviate suffering is often at significant personal risk even though the sector works towards the safest possible environment for all humanitarians.



Médecins Sans Frontières is one humanitarian aid organization. Over the past year they have been active in Libya's port city of Derna which experienced extreme flooding, south of Marrakech (Morocco) where earthquakes killed 3,000 people, in Gaza following the horrific attacks by Hamas and the subsequent war, in the Democratic Republic of Congo where 7 million people were displaced by armed rebellion, in Haiti where violence between criminal groups, and the effects of climate change led to an outbreak of cholera, in Somalia where torrential rains and floods killed over 100 people and displaced a further 750,000, in Ukraine where war continues to devastate lives and communities and in Sudan where 25 million people are now in need of assistance.

## An Advent love poem to holy darkness

By Rainer Maria Rilke translated by David Whyte

You darkness from which I come,  
I love you more than all the fires  
that fence out the world,  
for the fire makes a circle  
for everyone  
so that no one sees you anymore.  
But darkness holds it all:  
the shape and the flame,  
the animal and myself,  
how it holds them,  
all powers, all sight —  
and it is possible: its great energy  
is breaking into my body.  
I have faith in the night.

René Karl Wilhelm Johann Josef Maria Rilke, shortened to Rainer Maria Rilke, was an Austrian poet and novelist. He is widely recognized as a significant writer in the German language.



## 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.