



“Church in the Trees” -Morisset Uniting

RUSTLING LEAVES

17TH JUNE 2020

COVID 19 EDITION 6

SUNDAY REFLECTIONS BY OWEN SMYTHE P2

We are returning to normal church services on July 5th

At a special meeting of Church Council on Thursday June 11th, it was decided to return to worshipping in the church from July 5th.

The return will not be ‘business as usual’ as we, the Church Council, have to abide by current restrictions and submit a COVID 19 safety Plan to Synod and Presbytery.

Restrictions include;

- maximum 50 people
- Social distancing in seating and moving around
- NO singing or wind instruments.
- No morning tea for the first few weeks.

The service and worship space might be a bit different but we are up for the challenge.

For more see P 4

Praise be to God 1



A Reflection from Owen.

I write this reflection on Trinity Sunday, which in the Church's calendar, is the first Sunday after Pentecost. Pentecost is an important day in history for it is the day when Jesus' disciples received the Holy Spirit and began to share the message of salvation to the Jewish people gathered together in Jerusalem (Acts chapter 2).

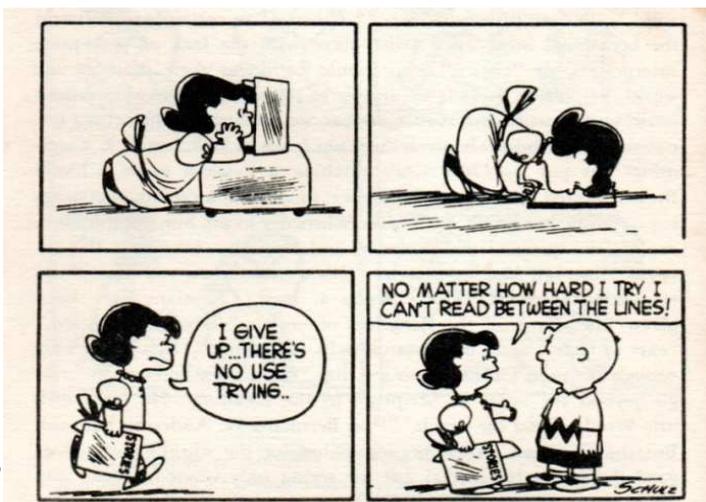
But what is the Trinity and how can we understand it?

The word "Trinity" is not found in the Bible but appears to have originated formally in the theology of the Church in the 4th century. The Holy Trinity refers to God being in three forms, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

This may be difficult for us to understand, particularly when we read passages such as John 16: 5-16 where Jesus speaks about returning to the Father and sending the Holy Spirit to the disciples. Also, John 14: 6-7, where Jesus says "if you knew me, you would know the Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him".

A simple, but limited analogy of a trinity, is that of water that can exist in three forms; solid as ice, liquid as water and gaseous as steam or vapour. It is the same substance but each form behaves differently. Ice can float on water, showing the two forms can be together at the same time. I find this analogy helpful in my understanding of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

However, we may never get our heads around a complete understanding of the Trinity, so we have to accept the doctrine by faith because of the words that Jesus said. His promise of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our lives, teaching us all things (John 14:25) is surely evidence to help us believe



Lectionary Readings

Jun 21 Pent 3 [12] Gn 21:8-21 Rom 6:1b-11 Mt 10:24-39

Jun 28 Pent 4 [13] Gn 22:1-14 Ps 13 Rom 6:12-23 Mt 10:40-42

Connect in Prayer.

Thinking of the anger and violence shown on our screens over the past weeks, pray for an end to racism, pray that everyone is treated with compassion and respect, pray for an end to hatred and violence. May God's peace enter every heart.

Pray for someone in our church community you may not have spoken to for several weeks. Pray for those who have struggled to endure the enforced isolation, and pray for those who are now fearful of entering back into the community.

As our country opens up further and seeks to find a way forward, pray that we will not lose the values learned in isolation, and that there will be a renewed caring for each other over the difficult times ahead.

People in the Bible Hagar.

Who was Hagar? What did she or didn't she do?

DESERTS OF THE MIND Genesis 21:1-21

Hagar's desert was a literal one. Today, ours are often deserts of the mind or heart. Abraham turned to Hagar to conceive a child, because Sarah could not. Sarah became jealous when Hagar had a son to Abraham. The repercussions lasted for months. Hagar and her son were abandoned and sent out into the desert.

Hagar's story is for those desert times in our own lives. They are the times when we have been enslaved or betrayed, when we feel expendable because the power structure of our lives seem oblivious to our gifts. Most of all, Hagar's story is for the times when we have been rejected and need more than anything to hear God's voice. Because in those times God's presence is required to open our eyes, so that we see the well that contains the water of consolation, mercy and assurance.

Post Pandemic Plans

Things are creeping towards a reopening of the community and our Church Council has decided it is safe enough to return to worship services in our church as well as our other activities.

The main points of concern are social distancing on entering and exiting the building, cleanliness of surfaces commonly touched by people in moving around and the restriction of singing which could spread the virus. We also have to record names of people entering the building and keep that list for a period of 28 days.

The regulations are not too onerous and so the Church Council has moved to recommence Sunday services starting on 5th of July. After much consideration, we have decided that we can safely serve communion so the 5th will be a communion service.

This is how we will manage our return.

There will be some signage requesting you do not enter if you are unwell. The maximum no of people will be displayed on a poster next to the front door (50)

Enter through front door only and go straight to your seat which will be at a distance of 1.5m from the next seat. Couples can sit together.

We will not be singing hymns but we will be using music in a creative way and the collection will be a retiring offering.

The communion elements will be served in individual containers, the bread being in the wine glasses. The server will wear gloves in handing out the elements.

Exit can be either by the main front door or the side church door near the vestry.

Doors and door handles as well as restrooms will be disinfected before and after the service.

Other Church Activities

Op Shop; Due to narrow aisles social distancing is not possible so will be closed for a bit longer.

C&L Discussions are ongoing to see how they could operate.

Red Dove Choir. Unfortunately singing is not permitted as it heightens the possible spread of viruses. It would appear they will be out of action for a while still.

Connections Group;

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST: We are planning a Whale Watching experience from Port Stephens on Friday 26th June 2020. Cruise departs Port Stephens at 10 am and returns around 1:00 - 1:30 pm. Cost \$55 Seniors. Due to COVID19 restrictions numbers will be limited, so early booking is essential. Travel will be by your own arrangement, complying with social distancing. If you are interested please contact Phill or Anne Hart ASAP.
Phill Hart

Outside hirers;

Several have suggested they want to return. They also have to fill in a COVID 19 Safety Plan which they have to submit to Church Council prior to starting up.

Lent Event

Those with money in their Lent Event jars which were handed out in March, could you bring them in on Sunday 5th July and we will dedicate them during the service.

Preaching Roster

July 5th Rev Bruce Edgell
July 12th Rev Joan Horgan
July 19th Barbara Dufty.
July 26th Cathie Smythe with women from the congregation.

Pastoral Care

Pastoral Care occurs with or without a Team, by nature of a community of faith:

34 “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. 35 By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(John 13:34-35)

Jesus remains the model to follow; so that God’s love and compassion is shared and evident in the community.

Each person has different needs and expectations. Some have a strong support network, others are more on the fringe of society. Some people thrive on interaction and connection; others are not keen to share; others are waiting for someone to approach them to make them feel welcome and included. We should all be looking for opportunities to listen to and empathise with someone else’s story.

The Pastoral Care Team coordinates and monitors what is already happening within the congregation/groups and endeavours to ensure that everyone does in fact *feel cared for*.

The Coordinator liaises with team members, group leaders, Church Council members and through personal contacts; with a view to establishing “every person care”.

Something to Ponder - When is a time you have experienced effective pastoral care?

Some people come into our lives to teach us about love.....

The love that rests within ourselves.

(Flavia Weedn)

Betty Small

Coordinator

Phone: 49 733181

From the Moderator

The Moderator of NSW ACT Synod of UCA, Rev Simon Hansford reflects in his recent message to the Church that after the Pandemic is gone, things will be different... but that might be a good thing. He writes...

“Isolation has been a challenge for almost everyone. However, as we try to negotiate living and worshipping in slowly-restored numbers, with physical distancing, complying with guidelines and wondering about our safety in the new environment, isolation might begin to look pretty palatable

[However] we need to learn how to adapt and change so that we can welcome new people into discipleship and faith. We need to prioritise children and young people, and that requires us to think in new ways. We need to learn how to make sacrifices with our property and finances to resource new ministries and communities across our Synod.

What if the challenges of this coronavirus season are teaching us how to sing the Lord’s song in new ways? “

Local happenings

At the beginning of the lockdown from the COVID 19 virus, we were advised to stay at home. Those were the days of shortages of fresh food and toilet paper. Hand sanitiser and social distancing were new words in our vocabulary.

In the last few weeks as life is starting to return to normal, action is beginning to appear in and around our buildings.

- Three weeks ago we opened the church on Thursday morning for people to drop in for whatever reason. We have continued that practice weekly and several meetings have taken place too.
- Three volunteers took to sanding back and recoating the outside timber around the front and back doors of the foyer area. In all 3 protective coats were applied and now the rich pine colour has been returned.
- 10’s of thousands of ants set up a nest in the office and were abruptly exterminated.
- Weeding and pruning have been undertaken outside the kitchen and along the drive to the manse. 7

Just for fun

How did you go with our find-a-words? Just about all of them were made up by members of our congregation.

The last one, about people in the Bible has a little extra challenge, as did some of the others.

Margaret Arbon asks “Where is Adam? That is good question.

Today we can have some fun with jokes about pets. Most of us have had a pet at least some time in our life. At the last count in 2018, Australia's pet population is was as follows;

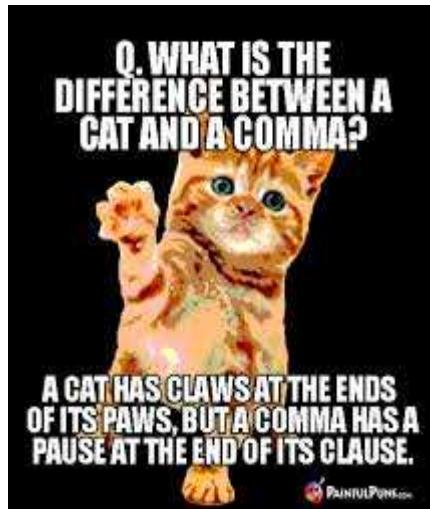
- Dogs = 4.8 million.
- Cats = 3.9 million.
- Birds = 4.2 million.
- Fish = 8.7 million.
- Reptiles and small mammals= 952,000.
- Other = 1.6 million.

Q: What do you call a fish without an eye?

A: Fsh!

Q: How does a dog stop a video?

A: He presses the paws button.



Q: What is a cat's favourite movie?

A: The sound of Mew-sic!

Q: There were 10 cats in a boat and one jumped out. How many were left?

A: None, because they were copycats!

Q: What do you call a deer with no eyes?

A: No I deer!

Q: What do you call a parrot that flew away?

A: A polygon 8



Southlakes Christian Education Scripture in Schools

SRE teacher update 4 June 2020

I'm sure you are as eager as I am to know when SRE can return to the schools. I am grateful for regular updates from Generate, Christian SRE and leading SRE providers whose representatives have been meeting with the Department of Education (DoE) to discuss SRE. The CEO of Christian SRE, Murray Norman, has sent most encouraging news, reporting that the Minister for Education and key DoE personnel strongly support the resumption of SRE at Stage 4 of the return to normal school operation.

While we still don't have specific dates, I believe it would be useful to start preparing for a possible return during Term 3, which commences on July 20.

What about teachers in vulnerable age groups?

The DoE has provided information from the Department of Health which defines 'vulnerable' as people over 70, people 65 and over with chronic medical conditions, all people with compromised immune systems, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with chronic medical conditions. SRE volunteers in any of these categories could begin thinking whether it is appropriate for you to return to the classroom at Stage 4.

If you are in one of the vulnerable groups I would like to assure you that we don't want you to feel under any pressure to resume teaching in the present circumstances. If appropriate, you may wish to consult your doctor and members of your family towards making an informed decision. You may wish to discuss your preferences with Cathie Smythe as the implementation of Stage 4 draws closer. When Stage 4 commences we will of course be subject to any advice that may (or may not) come from the DoE as to who can or cannot return to the classroom.

If we end up with fewer active SRE teachers than before the Covid crisis, I'm confident that the Lord will guide us as we negotiate with available SRE teachers and with school principals in planning for that situation.

Meanwhile, please continue to look out for people in your church who could prepare to become SRE teachers or helpers, even on an interim basis.

Are schools implementing special infection control procedures?

Yes – see the following website:

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families>

Online SRE resources

While waiting for Stage 4, we are urged to promote the online SRE resources in our churches and among our acquaintances. The relevant website is: <https://www.christiansre.com.au/learningfromhome>

Please pray for

the students in our SRE classes

the schools as they adjust to new circumstances

our SRE colleagues, particularly those in vulnerable groups

Wishing you much of God's blessing

John

Stop Press: Due to information received on June 12 it is planned that SRE classes will recommence at the beginning of Term 3. Praise God for answered prayer regarding resumption of SRE lessons. Please pray that we will have sufficient teachers to cover all classes as there could be some of our volunteers who are in the vulnerable age group and who do not wish to go back to the classrooms at that time.