



Newsletter Christmas 2012

*For unto us a child is
BORN, UNTO US A SON
is given: and the government
shall be upon his shoulder;
and his name shall be
called, Wonderful,
COUNSELOR,
The Mighty God
The Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.*



Our vision: **“Growing a community of faith
committed to Christ and making him known”**

Linking ministering communities in East Launceston, George Town,
Hillwood, Low Head, Pipers River, Riverside & Trevallyn



Hope

Christmas is here, and it's about time to dust off the decorations and ornaments. In fact, if you're reading this and haven't already got them out, then you're probably leaving things a bit late. I hope you've already done your decorating by the time you're reading this. (If not, it might be best to put the newsletter aside, get the decorating done, and then come back to it. You'll enjoy the read so much more if you don't have the decorating job hanging over your head.)



At the time of writing, I still have plenty of time to get the house into a festive mood, so I'm at a bit of an advantage. (But suppose I read this after it's published in the newsletter, and realise that I still haven't got to the

decorations! I hope it doesn't come to that).

It's the time of year when we dust off a word that we don't use often through the rest of the year (or at least not in its right sense). Hope. If you were paying really close attention, you'll see that I've already used it twice in this article. And in both occasions, it had the sense of "wish" – it showed you what I would prefer to see occur. But it did not convey any sense of the reasonableness or certainty of my wish. Of course, I'd like for you to be organised and relaxed at Christmas – not decorating the tree at 11:58 p.m. on Christmas Eve. But then I have no idea what your traditions or circumstances are, so no reason to think that what I hope for will come to pass. I'd like to be organised myself, but I don't know what might happen between then and now.

By now, I hope you're able to think of many examples of this usage in daily life:

Love is
always
supportive,
loyal,
hopeful,
and
trusting.

1 Cor.
13:7 CEV

- I hope it doesn't rain for our barbeque tomorrow
- I hope you get home safely
- I hope the Aussies win the Ashes series this year
- I hope the RBA doesn't raise interest rates again
- I hope I win the lottery

Hope, in this vague sense of wishful thinking, is something that optimistic people have in abundance (probably having nicked it from all the pessimists around). Biblical hope is not this faint and fluttery wishing. When the Bible commands or exhorts us to hope, it is not saying that we should abandon reality and cross our fingers. Rather it is telling us to fix our trust and our expectations on the firm foundation of God and of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at two examples of real hope that are recorded for us in Luke as part of the Christmas narrative: Zechariah and Simeon.

Zechariah was John the Baptist's dad. After John was born and named, and Zechariah recovers his

powers of speech, he prophesies (Luke 1:67-79):

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old..."

Zechariah goes on to recall all of God's promises to Abraham of redemption and deliverance. Then he refers directly to his baby son John, prophesying that John would be the prophet of the Most High God!

Notice the language that Zechariah used – "has visited and redeemed", "has raised up". It's all past tense! God has already done it. But Zechariah was speaking *before* Jesus' birth, and many, many years before Jesus' death and resurrection. He was speaking by the Holy Spirit, and displaying a firm and fixed trust in the promises of God, and an expectation of

Where hope would otherwise become hopelessness, it becomes faith.

Robert Brault

When the world says, "Give up," Hope whispers, "Try it one more time."

Hope is patience with the lamp lit.

Tertullian

Continued next page ...

*continued
from
previous
page*

*We are
all Inn
keepers
who
decide
if there
is room
for
Jesus*



God's faithfulness into the future. What an awesome display of hope – not a mealy-mouthed wish that things might turn out OK, but a robust and sure declaration of trust and expectation!

Later in Luke (2:25-32) we meet Simeon. He was a godly man in Jerusalem, waiting patiently for the 'consolation of Israel'. He had been promised that he would see the promised Messiah before he died. Jesus (aged about 6 weeks at this point) was brought to the temple for the purification ritual prescribed by the Law of Moses, and Simeon saw him. Here's what happened:

"[Simeon] took [Jesus] up in his arms and blessed God and said,

'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,

according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all

peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,

and for glory to your people Israel.'"

Again, look at the language and the context: "my eyes have seen your salvation" – a 6-week-old baby! Again, this is not wishful thinking or an expression of desires contrary to evidence. (If that's all it is, then the old man must have been senile at that point!) Rather, by the power of the Holy Spirit, this is Simeon expressing his trust in God and expectation of God's future working. He is expressing a robust, biblical hope.

From these two sketches we can see the sort of hope that is commanded of Jesus' followers: a firm trust in God's past promises and revelation, confidence in his eternal goodness, and expectation of his future work and grace.

From our vantage point, we know so much more than these two men. We have seen fully what they only saw in part or in promise. We have detailed and sure accounts of how God took on flesh, was born and lived as

one of us in the person of Jesus. We have consistent, eye-witness testimony of how he lived perfectly and died innocently. We have a clear and trustworthy record of God raising him to life, appointing him Lord, Saviour and Judge. What a tremendous foundation of trustworthiness and faithfulness we have! What a sure rock on which to build our lives! Friends, we have such a sound basis for our hope, our expectation, that God will act true to his word. Because of what he has done for us in Christ, we hope confidently that he will fulfil all his promises:

- That he will judge the earth with righteousness. That is, that the injustice plaguing our world will one day be set to right.
- That those in Christ will stand in that judgement! That we can be confident of God's forgiveness and acceptance of us when we are found in Christ.
- That those who belong to Christ will be with him forever. The other

implication of this promise is the warning that those who choose to reject Jesus will find themselves left out of God's Kingdom.

Christmas is an ideal opportunity for us to gaze long on the foundation of our faith and the source of our hope. It is a time when we can fill our souls with the knowledge of God's goodness to us. It is a time to ask the Holy Spirit to renew in us an expectation that God will continue his works of grace in our lives and our world. It is a time during which we can deliberately realign our priorities to reflect the hope that is in us.

God bless!

James



*It is
Christmas in
the heart
that puts
Christmas in
the air.*
W.T. Ellis

*Christmas
is not as
much about
opening our
presents as
opening our
hearts.*
Janice
Maeditere

*Perhaps
the best
Christmas
decoration
is being
wreathed in
smiles.*



Christmas Carol Celebration

St David's church in Riverside was packed and pumping for the annual Christmas Carols Celebration on Sunday 9 December. We adapted the "nine carols and lessons" format, which lets the Bible tell the history of Jesus' birth in its own words, reinforced with some fantastic music and singing.

We invited the choirs from Riverside Primary School along, and they performed a short selection of old and new Christmas carols (including the lesser known "funky town"). It was great to see the joy and excitement on the children's faces as they sang for us.

The service was a fantastic opportunity for us to welcome families into our church community, and to share with them the wonder and hope of God come among us. It also gave the school community a chance to give towards chaplaincy at Riverside Primary – nearly \$400 was raised!

A big thank you to all who contributed – catering,

musicians, organisers, and the congregations at St David's and St Oswald's who hosted.

Do pray for these families over the Christmas break – please pray that the word sown into their lives at this event would take root and bear fruit, pray that they would be kept safe over the break, and that they would be drawn closer to Jesus. Pray too for Lindy Bailey (school chaplain), that she would have a good rest and ongoing opportunities in the new year to share God's love and truth with the kids at the school.

**The Son
of Man
came to
look for
and to save
people who
are lost.**

**Luke
19:10 CEV**





Praise the Lord, the God of Israel! He has come to save his people. Our God has given us a mighty Saviour from the family of David his servant. Long ago the Lord promised by the words of his holy prophets.



Luke 1:68-70 CEV

Riverlinks Calendar

January 2013	
1st Tue	*** New Years Day Public Holiday
2nd Wed	10:00 am St Oswald's Healing service
3rd Thur	
4th Fri	
5th Sat	
6th Sun	9:00 am Pipers River 10:00 am East Launceston 10:00 am Riverside 10:30 am George Town 10:30 am Peace Haven
7th Mon	
8th Tue	
9th Wed	10:00 am St Oswald's Healing service
10th Thu	CMS Summerview
11th Fri	CMS Summerview
12th Sat	CMS Summerview
13th Sun	CMS Summerview 9:00 am Low Head 10:00 am East Launceston 10:00 am Riverside 10:30 am George Town 10:30 am Peace Haven 5:00 pm Trevallyn
14th Mon	
15th Tue	

January 2013	
16th Wed	10:00 am St Oswald's Healing service
17th Thur	
18th Fri	
19th Sat	
20th Sun	9:00 am Pipers River 10:00 am East Launceston 10:00 am Riverside 10:30 am George Town 10:30 am Peace Haven
21st Mon	Parish office reopens
22nd Tue	
23rd Wed	10:00 am St Oswald's Healing service
24th Thur	
25th Fri	
26th Sat	
27th Sun	9:00 am Low Head 10:00 am East Launceston 10:00 am Riverside 10:30 am George Town 5:00 pm Trevallyn
28th Mon	*** Australia Day Public Holiday
29th Tue	
30th Wed	10:00 am St Oswald's Healing service
31st Thur	

The **deadline** for the February Newsletter edition is **21st January**

OH&S for Christmas Carols



While shepherds watched
Their flocks by night
All seated on the ground
The angel of the Lord came down
And glory shone around.



Requiring shepherds to watch their flocks without appropriate and flexible seating arrangements is a contravention of health and safety regulations and human rights. The provision of benches, stools and orthopaedic chairs is recommended. The angel of the Lord is also reminded that before shining his or her glory around it must be ascertained that all shepherds are issued with suitable eyewear conforming to Australian Standards for filtering the harmful effects of UVA, UVB and glory.

We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain
Following yonder star

Navigation by yonder stars is not advised and we would politely suggest that traversing kings make use of satellite navigation or a recognised internet route-finder prior to commencing their journey. This will ensure the quickest route, and most optimal journey with regard to fuel consumption, is identified. In addition, whilst the gift of gold is considered acceptable, gifts of frankincense and myrrh are not appropriate due to the potential risk of allergic reaction caused by such oils and fragrances. A suitable alternative may be a gift voucher.

Jim asked his friend, Tony, whether he had bought his wife anything for Christmas.

“Yes,” came the answer from Tony who was a bit of a chauvinist, “I’ve bought her a belt and a bag.”

“That was very kind of you,” Jim added, “I hope she appreciates the thought.”

Tony smiled as he replied, “So do I, and hopefully the vacuum cleaner will work better now.”

Grandpa decided that shopping for Christmas presents had become too difficult. All his grandchildren had everything they needed, so he decided to send them each a cheque. On each card he wrote: “Happy Christmas from Grandpa P.S. Buy your own present!”

While Grandpa enjoyed the family festivities, he thought that his grandchildren were just slightly distant. It preyed on his mind into the New Year. Then one day he was sorting out his study and under some magazines, he found a little pile of cheques for his grandchildren which he had forgotten to put into the envelopes with the Christmas cards.



Messy Christmas

97 attended and enjoyed an hour of creative fun including a backdrop painting for a nativity scene. Collage characters were attached as soon as paint dried.



Precious Saviour,
Born the King of Kings,
Christ, the Anointed One

There were lots of activities which catered for all ages. James' Lucky Dip was the inspiration for an informative and challenging talk.



There's no other reason
Than to celebrate

A delicious tea of cold roast chicken, salad, bread and Christmas treats was enjoyed by all.



Jesus
And the eternal victory
He won
So this



Christmas,
take time

To reflect on
God's goodness

And the gift
of God's
precious Son.



By M.S.Lowndes



May the
humility of the
shepherds,
the perseverance
of the wise
men,
the joy of the
angels,
and the
peace of the
Christ-child
be God's gifts
to us and
to people
everywhere
this
Christmas
time.



The future is coming to birth

**The light
of God
surrounds us.**

**The love
of God
enfolds us.**

**The power
of God
protects us.**

**The
presence
of God
watches
over us.**

**Wherever we
are God is,
and all
is well.**

The story of Christ's birth powerfully engages our imaginations. Wise men make a long journey by the leading of a star. Shepherds praise God, angels sing, and the glory of the Lord shines around. In a manger and in great humility lies the Christ child, born of Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are reminded that, then as now, God enters into history to bring new life and hope. Even on the margins of the world and in obscurity—as in Bethlehem—God's future is always coming to birth by the power of the Spirit. As King Herod found, this is a power that the rulers of the world can neither master nor resist.

It is easy to lose heart when we look upon our world. It seems society has become habitually cynical and mistrustful, our public discourse thin and impoverished. So often we feel exhausted by endless marketing and material

consumption. We are thirsting for a new spirit—new ideas, new generosity and a new gratitude for all we have and are.

Christmas is the time for new imagination. Can we imagine that, even now—perhaps in obscurity—God's future is coming to birth by the power of the Spirit? The renewal of our society and our own lives may be nearer than we thought. Let us discern its coming and greet it with great joy and gladness.

*Archbishop Dr Phillip Aspinall,
Primate
Anglican Church of Australia*



I heard the bells on Christmas day
Their old familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet the words repeat
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And thought how,
as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along the unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

Till ringing, singing on its way
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime
Of peace on earth, good will to men.

And in despair I bowed my head
“There is no peace on earth,” I said,
“For hate is strong
and mocks the song
Of peace on earth,
good will to men.”

Then pealed the bells more loud
and deep:
“God is not dead, nor doth He sleep;
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail
With peace on earth,
good will to men.”

Henry W. Longfellow

God did not
send his
Son into
the world to
condemn
its people.
He sent
him to save
them!

John 3:17

CEV

I've been getting ready for Christmas
I'm revving up for the great day
my credit card's cracked
and my freezer is packed
'cause I started my shopping in May
the Kids are all pink with excitement
'cause Santa will come so they say
their lists are extensive,
extremely expensive
and they'll break it all by Boxing day

But it's worth all that
fuss Christmas morning
when their little eyes are all aglow
when we're all feeling merry
full of goodwill and sherry
and suffering from wind Ho Ho Ho

But please don't forget why we do it
why each year we must go to this fuss
for Jesus was born
on that first Christmas morn
And He died on the cross just for us

**The excitement of
Christmas at St Andrew's
Cathedral will again be
broadcast on ABC 1
at 7am on Christmas Day.**

This is an evangelistic
opportunity to share the
gospel as we tell neighbours,
friends and family it is on.
Watch it yourselves as you
open your presents or over
breakfast on Christmas
morning.

If you enjoy it and appreciate the
ABC broadcasting it remember to
tell the them and thank them.

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12-14-2012

I THINK YOUR LIGHTS MIGHT BE TOO BRIGHT
THIS YEAR



God Speaks Life

The Christmas story is a love story, one which speaks to our hearts.

In that stable we sense the warmth of human love shared between Mary and the infant Jesus, with Joseph, with all present there. But at a deeper level, Christmas is a story of God's love, God entering our world, reaching out to us, speaking to us.

And we honour one another when we in turn reflect that same love in the way we choose to live our lives, in our speech with another.

As I move around Tasmania I see God's love and grace in simple yet rich traditions – baptisms and confirmations, weddings and funerals. I see Christian people reaching out to their communities. All year I am reminded of God's Christmas love.

But in those same communities when we've had difficult matters to speak about this year, we so often have struggled to speak with each other in ways which reflect love, care and courtesy. We struggle to

speak as God has spoken to us.

This is a shared struggle, one in which the Church shares responsibility. We all need, in working together through the issues of our time, to learn to speak words of life to one another, to eschew words which bludgeon, belittle and condemn.

The infant became the man Jesus, master of the searching question which opens up conversation, which values the hearer. Can we learn to ask one another good but gentle questions, and to respond ourselves with care, with courtesy, with love? Can we nurture community in Tasmania built on mutual respect, on love?

Hope lies in the example of this infant who was born among us, this infant who is God's ultimate word to us. God speaks life to us; may God enable us to speak life to one another.

Christmas blessings,
Tasmania.

Shalom, *John*

*From Bishop
John's blog
www
.imaginary
diocese.org*

*Bishop John's
Christmas
message can
be viewed at
tinyurl.com/
d5vt8mn*

Reflecting on the wonder of Jesus Christ and his coming to live a human life I read a quote from the 2nd century Bishop Melito of Sardis. I was inspired by his thoughts and adapted them a little. I trust he forgives my reflection stimulated by his wonderful words. I wrote:

Jesus was carried in the womb of Mary yet is the Life of the world.

Jesus appeared as an infant yet was “Immanuel, God with us.”

Jesus walked on earth yet all the fullness of God lived in him.

Jesus worked as a carpenter yet the world was made through him.

Jesus needed earthly food yet he is the bread of life and whoever comes to him will never hunger.

Jesus asked water of a Samaritan woman yet whoever believes in him will never be thirsty.

Jesus appeared as a shepherd yet remained The Shepherd.

Jesus lived as a servant yet is Lord of all.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem yet in the new Jerusalem every tear will be wiped away.

Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many yet eternal life is in him.

Jesus asked “Who do you say that I am?” yet God declares, “This is my Beloved Son.”

*The original from — Melito of Sardis, 2nd century Bishop

Though the Son was incorporeal, He formed for Himself a body after our fashion. He appeared as one of the sheep; yet, He still remained the Shepherd. He was esteemed a servant; yet, He did not renounce the Sonship. He was carried in the womb of Mary, yet was arrayed in the nature of His Father. He walked upon the earth, yet He filled heaven. He appeared as an infant, yet He did not discard the eternity of His nature. He was invested with a body, but it did not circumscribe the unmixed simplicity of His Divinity... He needed sustenance inasmuch as He was man; yet, He did not cease to feed the entire world inasmuch as He is God. He put on the likeness of a servant, while not impairing the likeness of His Father.

*How do you seek to express the Incarnation of Jesus Christ?

The Apostle John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, expressed the Incarnation this way:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” – John 1:14

Christmas is a time to recall and celebrate the facts of the coming of Jesus Christ, the Incarnation.

Christmas 2012

East Launceston

21-23 Arthur St
East Launceston
0438 378 233

George Town

3 Anne St
George Town
0439 821 038

Hillwood

Hall - Jetty Rd
Hillwood

Low Head

Low Head Rd
Low Head

Peacehaven

185 Penquite Rd
Norwood

Pipers River

School Rd
Pipers River

Riverside

399 West Tamar Hwy
Riverside

Trevallyn

34 Bain Tce
Trevallyn
0409 799 419

Parish office

399 West Tamar Hwy
Riverside
6327 4742
office@riverlinks.net.au

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Contact us:

Parish Office (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)

6327 4742 office@riverlinks.net.au

Children & Young Families Ministry

6327 3482 kids_families@riverlinks.net.au

Website

www.riverlinks.net.au