

SAINT THEODORE'S TIDINGS



Advent-Christmas issue October 2026 – January 2027

*The Anglican Church of St Theodore
Cnr Swaine Avenue and Prescott Terrace
Toorak Gardens, S.A*

Website: www.theodores.church



St Theodore's Anglican Church recognises that we meet on the lands of the Kurna people. We express our gratitude for the sharing of this land; our sorrow for the personal, spiritual and cultural costs of that sharing; and our hope that we may walk together in harmony in a spirit of reconciliation.



Everyone, Praise the One Who Is!

Rev'd Dr Matthew Anstey

I have been immersed in Psalms scholarship lately while preparing lectures for university, and my own investigations have given me some new insights. One of the things I pondered was the most obvious and so easily overlooked: the meaning of *Hallelujah*.

Leonard Cohen's famous song "Hallelujah" has helped to make this Hebrew word one of the best-known in the world. It appears in Christian worship, classical music and popular songs, and has entered everyday speech. It is often translated as "Praise the LORD!", but that is not quite right. The Hebrew word has two parts: *Hallelu*, "Praise!" – meaning "you [plural] praise"; and *Yah*, short for Yahweh, the divine name for God, whose meaning is something like "he is". *Hallelujah* therefore means something more like "Everyone, praise the One Who Is!"

The plural form gives us an important clue to how praise works in the Psalms. *Hallelujah* addresses the whole community and calls us to praise Yahweh. Again and again, the Psalms present praise in this outward-facing way, calling others to recognise and respond to what is proclaimed about God.

Hallelujah is one expression within a much wider vocabulary of praise. Taken together, this praise language appears in 66 of the Psalter's 150 psalms, across the whole collection and in many different circumstances. But this praise language is not at all spread evenly, either within individual psalms or across the whole book of Psalms.

Within individual psalms, of the 137 verses containing explicit praise, 72 occur within the first or last ten per cent of their psalm. In other words, just over half of the praise verses occur very close to a psalm's beginning or ending. Moreover, closely-related expressions – such as blessing, thanksgiving and singing – also occur near psalm beginnings and endings at almost exactly the same rate.

This tells us that praise often helps to frame a psalm, setting its direction at the beginning and/or giving voice to the response towards which the prayer has travelled, sometimes after considerable anguish. It also points to a larger pattern in how the Psalms frame prayer itself, with beginnings and endings that orient worshippers towards God, invite others to join in praise, and guide the response the prayer seeks to articulate. Psalm 30 provides a good example of this journey of praise:

- ❖ the psalmist starts with a call to others, "Sing praises to the LORD, O you his faithful ones, and give thanks to his holy name" (v. 4);
- ❖ then the psalmist remembers distress: "Weeping may linger for the night," the psalmist says, "but joy comes with the morning" (v. 5);
- ❖ the distress includes even the possibility of death: "Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?" (v. 9);
- ❖ by the end, however, "You have turned my mourning into dancing" (v. 11); and
- ❖ the psalm concludes, "O LORD my God, I will give thanks to you forever" (v. 12).

(cont./)

Across the Psalter as a whole, the distribution is strikingly lop-sided. Psalms 146–150 comprise only about 2.4 per cent of the Psalter’s verses, yet they contain exactly one quarter of all its explicit praise vocabulary. Praise language is more than thirteen times as dense in these final five psalms as it is across the preceding 145. The Psalter does not gradually become more praise-filled; rather, it culminates in an extraordinary eruption of praise.



In these final psalms praise dominates, culminating in the great cacophony of Psalms 146–150. Each of these five psalms begins and ends with *Hallelujah*, so that the repeated call to praise surrounds everything within them. Psalm 150 then piles sound upon sound: “trumpet sound”, “lute and harp”, “tambourine and dance”, “strings and pipe”, “clanging cymbals” and “loud clashing cymbals” (vv. 3–5). The extraordinary concentration of praise vocabulary at the end of the Psalter is therefore matched by the language and sound of the Psalms themselves.

When I explored in more depth the features of praise, I also discovered a few things that I had not appreciated fully before: the rationale of praise, inclusive praise, and the interweaving of lament and praise.

The Psalms commonly tell us why God should be praised. Psalm 103 begins, “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and do not forget all his benefits” (v. 2), and then remembers what those benefits are . . . God “forgives all your iniquity”, “heals all your diseases”, “redeems your life from the pit”, and “crowns you with steadfast love and mercy” (vv. 3–4). A few verses later, “The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed” and is described as “merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love” (vv. 6, 8). Praise, in other words, has a *rationale*, incorporating claims about who God is and what God has done.

Praise also repeatedly widens the circle of those invited to participate. Psalm 117 reaches beyond Israel: “Praise the LORD, all you nations! Extol him, all you peoples!” (v. 1). Psalm 96 goes further still: “sing to the LORD, all the earth” (v. 1), and calls upon the “families of the peoples” to give glory to God (v. 7). Psalm 148 expands the invitation through the whole created order: sun and moon, mountains and trees, animals and birds, “rulers of the earth and all peoples”, and “young men and women alike, old and young together” (vv. 3, 7–12). Praise in the Psalms has a remarkable tendency to enlarge the community of those addressed, across peoples, generations and ultimately the created world. Given our commitment to inclusion at St Theodore’s, I found this particularly inspiring.

Finally, I knew lament was prominent in the Psalter, but I had tended to think of it as separate from praise. Psalm 42 showed me how closely the two can be woven together:

- ❖ The speaker’s “tears have been my food day and night”, while others continually ask “Where is your God?” (v. 3);
- ❖ yet in the very next verse the speaker remembers going to the house of God “with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving” (v. 4);
- ❖ then comes the repeated self-address: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him” (v. 5);
- ❖ the anguish continues: “all your waves and your billows have gone over me” (v. 7), followed almost immediately by “at night his song is with me” (v. 8);
- ❖ even after asking God, “Why have you forgotten me?” (v. 9), the psalm returns to the same hope: “I shall again praise him, my help and my God” (v. 11).

Prayer here does not move from lament to praise; instead, praise is voiced from within the lament itself.

And after the whole adventure of these 150 psalms – through joy, despair, anger, and hope – where does the book end? With that same word: *Hallelujah*!

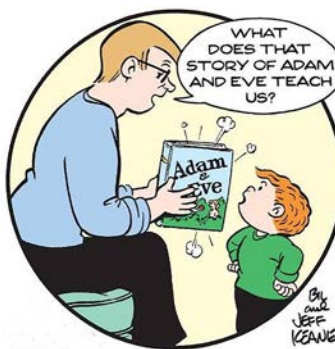
“Everyone, praise Yahweh!”



That sure made me hungry when we sang “Lasagna in the Highest”



Saying “Amen” is like pressing the SEND button for your prayers

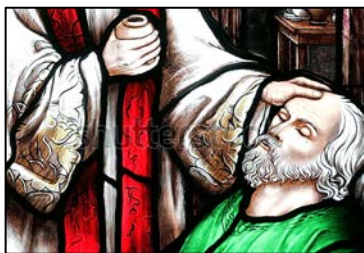


“Not to eat fruit”



Holy Unction

The sacrament of healing



Nearly every Sunday at our Sung Eucharist service, at Communion time, you will have seen the Deacon pick up from the altar a small metal container and go down to the baptistry where a few people take part in a brief ritual.

You may have wondered what goes on there and what it is all about. It is the administration of the “Sacrament of Holy Unction” or “the Anointing of the Sick”.



Fr Peter Anson

The Sacraments: Jesus nominated two rituals which He commanded the church to perform – Baptism and the Eucharist – in which all Christians should participate. As time went on, the church recognised other rituals of a similar nature, except that it is not necessary for everyone to take part. So in addition to Baptism and the Eucharist, in the Anglican church there are five other sacraments . . . Confirmation; Confession and Absolution; Holy Matrimony; Ordination; Unction.

What they all share is an “outward visible sign” (water and words in the case of Baptism) and an “inward spiritual grace” (communion with our Lord in the case of the Holy Eucharist).

Holy Unction: This sacrament of Holy Unction usually comes in two parts: the laying-on of hands accompanied with appropriate words, and anointing on the forehead with oil blessed by the bishop – these constitute the “outward visible sign”. The “inward spiritual grace” is the grace of God’s healing.

History. Holy Unction has scriptural authority. Mark 6:14 tells us that the apostles anointed the sick, and St James tells us directly that in the case of illness, the elders should be called to anoint the sufferer (James 5:14 ff). This appears to have been the normal use of the sacrament for six or seven hundred years or so from apostolic times. However from the 8th century and through the Middle Ages, the emphasis changed from ‘the healing of the sick’ to ‘preparation for death’. Even the title of the sacrament was changed to ‘extreme unction’, indicating that it was reserved for those *in extremis* and it became known as the ‘last rites’. Its normal use declined greatly, but not entirely.

The first Anglican Book of Common Prayer of 1549 includes the rite of anointing in the ‘Visitation of the Sick’ but it was omitted from the 1552 and 1662 revisions of the Prayer Book. In very recent times, particularly since the Second Vatican Council, the church has restored the sacrament of Holy Unction to its original purpose – the healing of the sick – and encouraged its use.

Who may receive the Sacrament of Holy Unction? Anyone may receive this sacrament. However, since it is all about healing, there should be present some sort of spiritual, physical or mental disorder of a serious nature. “Serious” is subjective, so perhaps it would be better to say that if the disorder is causing you concern, then you are eligible.

It is also desirable that you should prepare for its reception. This means that you should pray about it and especially ask for God’s forgiveness for any wrongs you may have committed so that you would be in the best condition to receive His grace.

What should we expect?

Our hope is, whatever the ailment is, we will be healed. We can be assured healing will happen, but it may not be in the way we expect it to be. We might not immediately see how this healing has occurred, but we know God will always do what is best for us. It may be that we will only see it in retrospect and it could be some considerable time later.

How often can I receive this Sacrament?

As many times as you feel the need!

St. Theodore’s – Contacts

Parish Priest: Rev’d Dr Matthew Anstey
(Office – 8333-1567)

Associate Priests: Fr Peter Anson
Fr David Thornton-Wakeford

Priest’s Warden: Lee Fulton

Peoples’ Warden: Kate Hawke

Parish Council (2026) – Rev’d Dr Matthew Anstey, Keturah Bryson, Ian Campbell, Lee Fulton, Kate Hawke, Angela Hazebrook, Angela Jones (*Secretary*), John Needs (*Treasurer*), Etienne Scheepers, Catherine Travaglione

‘The Tidings’ Editor: Dr Richard Keene (ph. 0416-275-161)



St Theodore's Parish Website

In the beginning . . . "theodores.org"

Nick Williams explains the origins . . . In response to a request from the (then) priest-in-charge, Fr Peter Thomson, I developed the original parish website in June 2010. The site (domain) name – 'theodores.org' – was selected, and the service provider chosen to host our website was 'just host' . . . they supported a web application known as 'cpanel' as the back-end user interface. The 'cpanel' application was easy for me to use as I had already been involved with web development at the Army Museum at Keswick, and at that point I had also used '[just host](http://justhost.com)' for a website for the Adelaide Universities Regiment Association.



Support for the website continued somewhat seamlessly for about 10 years until I was notified that upgrades of 'cpanel' would no longer be supported, necessitating a change to another web application such as Word Press. I was unfamiliar with this software at the time and had only used DreamWeaver as a development product. Fortunately, a new developer, Nicholas Filsell, was identified as a person willing to take over the website and develop new and exciting software in Word Press. This was a highly successful transition as Nicholas had the talent and flair to develop a far more attractive and relevant website, with the capacity to upload sermons, notices and pew sheets, as well as photographs of events and a range of information concerning the use of the church, the rental of the halls, and services that could be offered by the parish priest. I continued to support the loading of information onto the website in terms of the newsletter, orders of service, pew sheets and other information about the parish council and key figures in the management of the church.

However, in 2025, the parish council decided to develop a new website using a product called 'Web Flow' with a developer based in Melbourne. The new website is described below, and I continue to upload the orders of service and the pew sheets.

In finishing, I wish to acknowledge the tremendous contribution provided by Richard Keene and his son-in-law Nicholas Filsell in the transformation of the website in 2021, and Nicholas' continued support when I managed to corrupt a file or two, and giving advice with uploading photographs and activity reports of some of the 'social' aspects of church life . . . until the change to the new website in 2026

. . . to "theodores.church" An overview of the new website

Peter Burke comments on the new website . . . It was the wartime Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, who in 1942 stated "*The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who do not belong to it*". William Temple was famous for his radio addresses during his two short years as Archbishop of Canterbury. Through his radio addresses and sermons, Temple used technology to boost civilian morale and introduce the philosophies around the future British Welfare State. I was reminded of the above quote when I was thinking about what I would say about the updated website for the parish.



In general terms the role of a website is to allow the wider public to access information and to be invited to engage in what it promotes. In this context, the updated St Theodore's website seeks to widen the horizons of awareness of the existence of St Theodore's, its identity and purpose, its activities and different ways to engage.

The original website was important in two ways: it opened a new pathway to communication with the wider community and it was a new source of information for parishioners, providing details of Sunday services, as well as recent and forthcoming activities. And as with anything that is alive, a website must change and grow, and while the content of the new website is firmly derived from its predecessor, there are some additional features.

An important change is its appearance – the modification from the style of a ‘home page’ with links to secondary pages that cover specific topics, to a site which has a continuous ‘flow’.

As one who worked with the group who developed the updated website, I can say that the intention was to make it as accessible and inviting as possible to those who ‘do not belong’ to St Theodore’s – to use Temple’s quote. This does not mean it is of no use to existing members of the St Theodore’s worshipping community: rather, the updated website offers a glimpse into our life together.

The website ‘page’ initially addresses our core identity and the main ways we engage with each other – not just for our own benefit, but also for the ‘benefit of those who do not belong’. The words ‘Living Faith, open to all’ seek to say this crisply. There is an invitation to attend worship, as well as to view the 9.30 am Sunday Eucharist on livestream or to watch previous sermons.

The top of the page has the traditional ‘Menu’ as a guide to find out more, as well as an opportunity to make contact, and – as a new feature of the website – to donate. The menu provides options to find out more and engage in different ways, including Our Vision (the ‘Mission Action Plan’, prayerfully discerned in parish forums in 2020 and revised in 2023), facilities’ hire, pew sheets and orders of services, and The Tidings parish newsletter.

Scrolling down the page provides additional information and further expands the story of our identity and how to engage. This includes a simple Acknowledgment of Country which reflects the way we do this in all our liturgies. Then comes an identity statement which describes as clearly as possible the nature of St Theodore’s Parish, with an emphasis on the things we value and how we seek to honour diversity and inclusion.

Further down the webpage, there emerges a focus on people through a few recent photographs providing a ‘glimpse into our community life’ and a short statement by those who have quite recently joined the parish. This is likely to be updated and expanded periodically.

Then comes a new feature of the website ‘What’s happening at St Theodore’s?’ which is regularly updated and provides key dates and times of regular and special events. This expands the story as to how people are valued and how to engage.

What follows are photos of key leaders within the wider leadership of the parish – notably the clergy and members of the parish council.

There then appears a new feature of the website, ‘Welcoming answers for every journey’. The intention here is to go deeper into the identity and purpose of St Theodore’s parish, what we believe, how we seek to engage with each other and expand the circle of belonging. Each question provides a brief answer and an invitation to ‘read more’. There are six questions: *What is a typical service like? Are families and children included? Is everyone truly welcome here? What if I have faith questions? How can I get involved? How do I connect with someone?* The overall approach is to answer these questions simply and honestly, with a focus on invitation.

Then comes a distinctive ministry of the parish, the Memorial Garden, with information on its place and purpose and how to make enquiries in relation to an interment site.

Finally, opportunities to connect are reiterated, including an opportunity to call the parish office (limited hours) and visit the site, with a useful link to a map of the area – and an open invitation to leave a message. Then right at the end there is an invitation to join the parish mailing list for regular (weekly) information, as well as ‘Useful Links’ which includes the Diocese of Adelaide, AnglicareSA and the Anglican Board of Mission, and links to the Anstey Psalter and the personal website of Matthew Anstey, our priest-in-charge.

If you have not already viewed the website, I encourage you to do so now or soon. The URL of the site is ‘theodores.church’.

If you are moved to make a comment about the website, how it has benefited you and how it can be further developed, you can send a message near the end of the webpage. The website aims to be interactive in some ways . . . it is a worthwhile complement to the personal connections which can follow. Both have a place in enabling people to feel welcome to engage in an activity or to contemplate belonging to a parish such as St Theodore’s. The website is more than just a site for information, but an invitation to community, belonging, faith and hope.

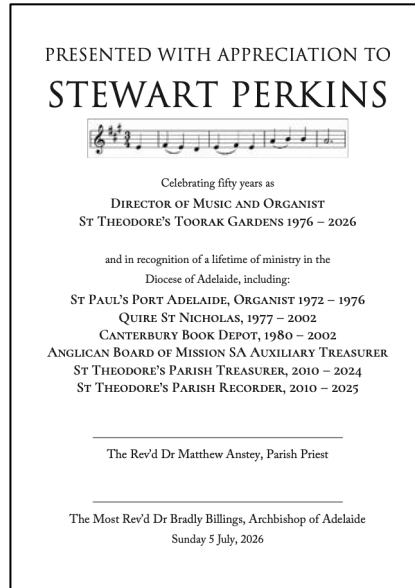
An Editorial Epilogue . . . It is important to recognise the dedicated and faithful service of Nick Williams as the webmaster of the ‘theodores.org’ [site](#) over an extended period from its inception in 2010 to its replacement by the new ‘theodores.church’ [site](#) earlier this year. Nick still continues in a [supporting role](#) with the maintenance of the current website.

As a parish, we must also gratefully acknowledge the contribution of Nicholas Filsell, who – as well as facilitating the major design of the updated ‘theodores.org’ website in 2021, and assisting Nick Williams with maintenance of the website over the period 2021-2026 – also generously gifted the hosting of the website service (and any other operational expenses of the site) at no cost to the parish over that period.

Organists at St Theodore's

A very important event in St Theodore's history took place on Sunday, June 28th when Stewart Perkins played the organ for the last time at our 9.30 am Eucharist, on the 50th anniversary of his first service as organist in 1976. There were articles on Stewart (and the organ's history) presented in the last issue of *The Tidings* to mark this very significant event in our parish.

The following week (on July 5th) Stewart was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation from the parish by Archbishop Bradly Billings, who presided and preached at that service. Photos of the Certificate and the presentation are shown.



And so we look to a new era in the music in our parish . . . music is such an important part of our liturgy . . . and it is a great pleasure to welcome our new organist 'team': **Andrew Moschou**, who is our Director of Music, and will be playing for us at most services . . . and his two 'assistants' – **Val Estrella** and **Casey McEwan** – who will be rostered when Andrew is unavailable. Please make Andrew, Val and Casey feel part of the parish community.

An introduction to our new organists . . .

Andrew Moschou

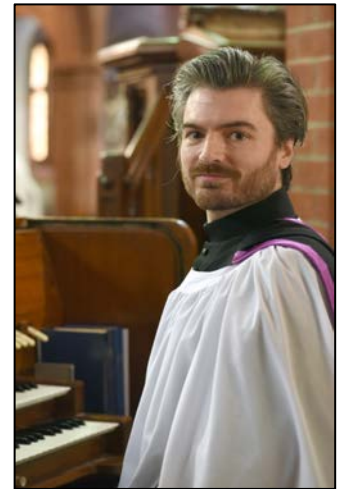
I am a semi-professional musician with a background in piano, cello and orchestral music – but I now focus in particular on choral music and I sing with the Graduate Singers. I have played piano for most of my life and was taught by Libby Rutter, becoming an Associate of Music Australia in 2009. I was also briefly taught composition by David Gallasch (he was the organist at Christ Church, North Adelaide for about 50 years – whether this was more or less than Stewart's tenure here I don't know). Although he never taught me the organ, David showed me how to play, and I am principally self-taught on the instrument.

I ended up being drawn to community and ensemble musicianship, rather than solo playing, and I joined the Adelaide University Choral Society. I began to be exposed to liturgical music much more, and at about the same time I commenced as the organist at St Richard's Anglican Church, Lockleys, working together with the parish choir. I very much enjoy working with other people and helping them to achieve their goals. This fits well in my day job as a teacher.

I occasionally compose. Last year, I wrote a setting of *Conditor alme siderum* ('Creator of the Stars'), an Advent vespers hymn for choir, organ and oboe, which is being considered for performance later this year.

Matthew Anstey and I first met on Easter day in 2010 and several more times during my years at Lockleys. Peter Burke too; it is fascinating to come across old names again. I took up a semester of Greek and Hebrew at St Barnabas and Matthew taught me Hebrew! He probably doesn't remember these classes, but that's okay, as neither do I. But I still use Greek; I enjoy reading Greek, in particular Orthodox liturgical hymns and Septuagint psalms. I am translating some Orthodox liturgy into contemporary and easily understandable English. Matthew does not know it yet (well, he does now that he has read this sentence), but no doubt we will have some chats on the subject.

I thank Stewart Perkins for his remarkable dedication. His assistance during the transition has been wonderful. One amazing thing that he has put together is the resource of the musical records of the parish going back so many years. Big shoes to fill! I am looking forward to working with the whole parish and being part of your community – which has already proved to be so welcoming and engaging.



Val Estrella



Val was born in Sydney in the mid-2000's and enjoyed a musical upbringing, starting private studies in piano from a young age. He spent his first year of high school at St Mary's Cathedral College, located in Sydney's centre . . . and the regular exposure to the cathedral's prestigious liturgical music programs was the catalyst for Val's interest in the organ. He began lessons with emeritus cathedral organist Peter Kneeshaw early in the school year and gave his concert debut at the organ of the Sydney Town Hall not long afterwards.

Val and his family moved to Adelaide the following year (2018), and his remaining high school years were spent at Marryatville High School. He continued studies in organ with Mark Joyner and held an Organ Scholarship at Payneham Road Uniting Church from 2018 to 2022. From 2023 to the present, he has held an Organ Scholarship at Pilgrim Uniting Church, where he regularly gives recitals and plays for services. In 2024,

Val – accompanied by Pilgrim Church organists Peter Kelsall and Christopher Bridge, renowned Sydney organist David Drury and Adelaide organist Greg Crawford – toured a host of historically-significant organs throughout Europe. These included the monumental Cavaillé-Coll organs of Église Saint-Sulpice (Paris), Abbaye Saint-Ouen (Rouen) and the Müller organ of Sint-Bavokerk (Haarlem) . . . among many others.

From 2023 to 2025, Val completed a Bachelor of Science in Experimental & Theoretical Physics and is currently completing a Master of Research in high-energy physics at Adelaide University. He plans to pursue higher studies in organ overseas in the near future.

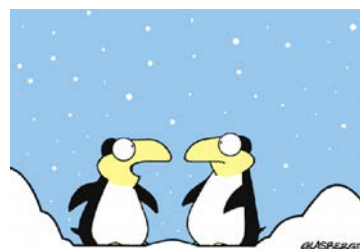
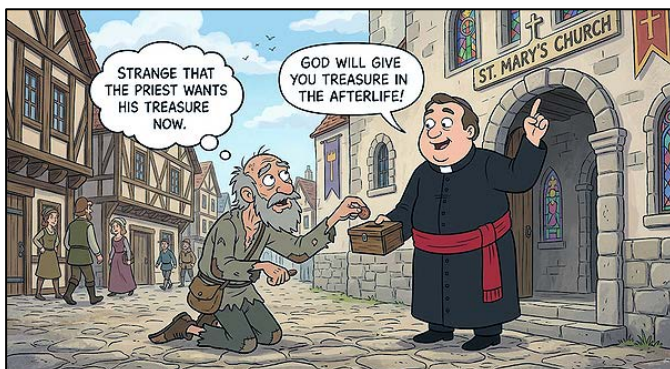
Casey McEwan

For almost ten years, Casey has been studying classical and contemporary piano privately and only recently decided to study the organ, satisfying a long fascination for the instrument he has had since childhood.

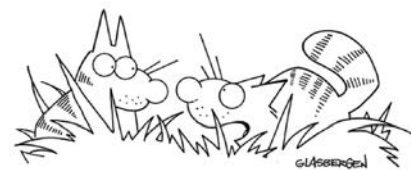
Coming from a non-religious background, Casey's first introduction to the pipe organ was through cinema . . . an interest encouraged by his parents who took him on a tour of St Peter's Cathedral in Adelaide. In 2022, through connections with the Organ Music Society of Adelaide, Casey began lessons with Ashleigh Tobin OAM, resident organist at the time at Scots Church Adelaide. Casey has since held a series of scholarships as 'Organ Scholar' at Scots Uniting Church (2022-2023) and at Payneham Road Uniting Church . . . and currently at Pilgrim Uniting Church where he is now in his second year as an Organ Scholar. He plays regularly with the choir of Pilgrim Uniting Church for Evensong and worship services.



As of 2026, Casey has begun a Bachelor of Music (Classical Performance – Organ) at the Elder Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide University, under the tutelage of Josh van Konkelenberg. Casey regularly performs around Adelaide, both in solo concert and with orchestras and ensembles . . . including the Elder Conservatorium of Adelaide Wind Orchestra, the Adelaide Youth Orchestra, and the Royal College of Church Music. Through his involvement with church music, Casey has developed a passion for liturgical music, and it has remained an integral part of his regular work. Casey currently plays regularly for Sunday morning services at Pilgrim Uniting Church and Scots Uniting Church Adelaide.



Faith means believing in things you've never seen . . . like your feet



The Lord causes me to lie down in green pastures because that's where the fattest mice are

A Meditation

Rev'd Andrew Mintern

Andrew has been parish priest at Glenelg since 2015 – which involves ministry at St Peter's Glenelg, St Martin's Glenelg South, and chaplaincy and governance duties at St Peter's Woodlands Grammar School. He has been ordained for 33 years and worked in different parishes and schools in this diocese, as well as serving as an Archdeacon from 2016-2024. His interests include writing and playing music, walking, chess, and spending time with family.

We thank Andrew sincerely for this contribution to our newsletter.



NIGHT AND DAY – TWO STARTLING PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS IN JOHN'S GOSPEL

Introduction

A unique aspect of John's Gospel is the in-depth accounts of personal encounters with Jesus. For example: Nathanael (1:43-51); the man healed by the pool of Bethzatha (5:1-18); the healing of the man born blind (9:1-41); and intense episodes with Mary and Martha, Pilate, Thomas and Peter. I want to focus on two amazing personal encounters – Nicodemus (3:1-21) and the Samaritan woman at the well (4:1-42)

What is so great about John's Gospel?

Each year in my parish I prepare daily emailed Lenten reflections. I commenced with Luke/Acts in 2022; Matthew in 2023; Mark in 2024 and then broke the cycle in 2025 with forty readings and reflections for Hope25. When it came to this year I thought: *"Oh well, I guess I had better complete the set and do John's Gospel"*.

I was not too enthused because John was my least-preferred Gospel. However, I was aware that for many people (particularly Anglicans for some reason) John is a favourite. Some years ago I was at a Bible seminar where the leader asked people to raise their hand for their favoured Gospel. No one raised their hand for Matthew; a goodly number for Luke; just a few (myself included) for Mark; and, more than half of the forty or so attendees raised their hands for John. Clearly it was the most popular Gospel for that crowd. So, when I considered Lent this year, I realised maybe I was missing something.

Of course, I had read John several times in my life and I had to admit that it contained some of my favourite Bible verses (e.g. John 3:16, 8:12, 10:10, 10:14, 14:1-4, 14:27, 15:12-13). So I approached the task with a sense of both apprehension and positive anticipation.

Why is John different?

John is referred to as the fourth Gospel, which implies that it is different from the others. The synoptic ('same-sight') Gospels are all connected . . . Matthew and Luke drew on Mark as a common source, as well as another common source called Q (from the German – Quelle). John is quite different in style and structure. There is no birth narrative in John. John's Gospel takes three years rather than one – three annual Passover meals are mentioned (2:13, 6:4, 11:55). John locates more of the action in Judea or Jerusalem, whereas the synoptics place the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. Prominent figures in John . . . like Nicodemus, Lazarus and the woman in Samaria . . . do not appear in the synoptics.

John also appears to be written for a very specific context. We cannot know exact details but there are clues within the text. The Gospel is very Jewish, structured around key Jewish feasts and yet, uncomfortably for us the modern reader, the term 'the Jews' is often used in a very negative way. Commentator Brendan Byrne suggests that *"members of the community were in a situation where they had emerged from a close and increasingly bitter relationship and 'dialogue' with the local Jewish synagogue"* [B. Byrne, Life Abounding – A Reading of John's Gospel, p.7]. Negative reference to 'The Jews' in the Gospel seems to point to certain hostile authorities who were causing fear for the community. The purpose of the Gospel seems to be to strengthen the faith of those who are part of John's community that has separated from the synagogue, but also to encourage those who are silently sympathetic to come across and openly join them – an example of this is Nicodemus, whom we will look at in a moment. As well as this, the Gospel is universal in scope and looks beyond the Jewish confines, possibly because non-Jewish people were now joining John's community. At the end of the encounter with the Samaritan woman, Jesus is proclaimed as the *'Saviour of the World'*.

Nicodemus at Night - The First Personal Encounter with Jesus (John 3:1-21)

Given this context, consider the opening verse of this passage: *"There was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night . . ."*. What a powerful set-up! Nicodemus is a Jewish leader, a respected member of the community, why is he sneaking about at night? From the suggested context of John's community, we can surmise why the visit under the cover of darkness.



Nicodemus does not appear in any other Gospel, but in John he plays an important role. Beyond this encounter, he defends Jesus before the other Jewish leaders (7:50-52) and assists Joseph of Arimathea with the anointing and burial of Jesus (19:39-42). It seems that through the Gospel, Nicodemus gradually moves out of darkness into light.

His conversation with Jesus is one marked by curiosity, misunderstanding and enlightenment. Nicodemus is genuinely curious about Jesus' teaching – he knows Jesus must be from God because of the signs he is doing, and he wants to know more. Jesus tells him that to see the Kingdom of God one must be born from above [3:3]. Here a misunderstanding occurs. The Greek word *anōthen* can mean both 'again' and 'from above'. Nicodemus takes it literally to mean being born 'again' and thus his somewhat naïve question about re-entering

the mother's womb. Jesus clarifies by saying one must be born of water and the Spirit [3:5]. Now, immediately after this passage Jesus goes out to spend time with John the Baptist. So the implication is that the physical act of baptism is one thing, but the radical transformation within a person is the work of the Spirit, and that is what is required to see and enter God's kingdom.

Jesus then reveals a deeper purpose of God and his own mission on earth in the timelessly powerful verse 3:16 (the most quoted verse of scripture): *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life"*. From this we glean four foundational principles of the Christian faith – God's motivation is love; God's gift to us is the Son; our response is belief; God's gift to us is eternal life.

The theme of light and dark returns and Jesus explains the tragedy that light has come into the world, but the people have preferred darkness [3:19]. The irony here is that Nicodemus, a teacher of Israel, has come to Jesus in the darkness of night, but from his unfolding story (and the story of those in John's community) there is an invitation to move more confidently into the light.

Photini in the Day – A Second Personal Encounter with Jesus (John 4:1-42)

Although she is not named in the Gospel, it is beautiful that the Orthodox tradition has named the Samaritan woman at the well. Photini means 'enlightened one' and what a role model she is for us. Contrasting with Nicodemus who comes to Jesus at night, this encounter occurs right in the middle of the day. More than that, Nicodemus, a leader, had every reason to confidently come in the day; this woman had every reason to hide in the night.

Jesus asks Photini for a drink and in doing so crosses three social boundaries of the time – she was a Samaritan, a woman and a sinner. Photini is shocked by the request, at which Jesus responds that she could ask him for living water. Just like Nicodemus' confusion about being born *again/from above* . . . here there is confusion between *living water* and *running water*. Photini assumes Jesus means running water, but Jesus refers to something deeper – the living water of God's fullness of life.



In the conversation, the woman's dubious history (or possibly her victimhood) is disclosed. There is no judgement in the text, although clearly her townsfolk judge her, which explains why she comes to the well alone at noon. William Loader points out that *"the exposure of the information does not lead to Jesus telling her off or cutting off contact with her. It just reinforces the fact that he does the opposite: he treats her as a person of worth and takes her seriously"* [William Loader, "The New Testament With Imagination", p.163]. Photini does not shrink from Jesus' knowledge of her but instead challenges him about the differences between Jews and Samaritans. This leads Jesus to acknowledge that the time is coming (and presumably already had for John's community) when those differences will not matter and people will worship in *"spirit and truth"* [4:24].

Photini then becomes a missionary to her people, giving brave testimony to her townsfolk (whom she had previously been avoiding) and inviting them to come and see Jesus. As a result they proclaim him as the *"Saviour of the World."* [4:42].

Conclusion

These two powerful personal encounters with Jesus would have spoken deeply to John's community of Christians, but equally they have much to challenge and inspire us too. In what ways are we like Nicodemus? In what ways are we like Photini? Through personal encounter with Jesus, we too can move from darkness to light, from fear to courage, from shame to confidence, from death into life.

If you would like to read more, I have sent a PDF and eBook version of my Lenten reflections on John's Gospel to Richard Keene, the Editor of The Tidings. Please contact Richard if wish to obtain copies.

Parish News . . .



Celebration of our Patronal Festival

We were delighted to welcome Bishop Chris McLeod as celebrant and preacher at the celebration of our Patronal Festival Eucharist on Sunday, September 13th



Indigenous Rural Nursing Scholarship

In 2021, the parish of St Theodore's Anglican Church established the "Indigenous Rural Nursing Scholarship". The scholarship, valued at \$2,000 per annum, seeks to provide assistance to an undergraduate Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student enrolled in the Bachelor of Nursing course at Flinders University to undertake their mandatory Professional Experience Placement (PEP) at an approved educational facility in a rural or remote setting.

**STOP
PRESS**

We are pleased to note that Flinders University has just advised us that the 2026 Scholarship has been awarded to **Akira Barnes**, who will be undertaking her PEP in Renmark in the near future. We look forward to receiving a report from Akira after her placement – hopefully to appear in the next issue of The Tidings.

In the meantime, Akira wished to comment . . . *"I would like to thank the St Theodore's parish for donating this scholarship. As a nursing student the scholarship will assist me with the cost of my studies and allow me to focus on my placement and education. Personally, this scholarship motivates me to continue to work hard towards my studies. I truly appreciate the support towards my future nursing career"*.

Please note that the 'Indigenous Rural Nursing Scholarship' is maintained by individual donations from members of the St Theodore's community and friends of the parish. We invite you to donate to this initiative by

- ❖ placing your donation in an envelope marked 'Scholarship' in the collection plate; or
- ❖ electronically through BankSA: details - BSB 105-149; Account 557053840; using the reference 'Scholarship'.

Donations will be eligible for taxation deductibility. If you seek that option, then payment must be made directly to Flinders University (to an account 'Indigenous Rural Nursing Scholarship') on a prescribed form, available from the Parish Office.

New Parish Vestments



The new red set of vestments: Fr Peter Anson (wearing the dalmatic) and Rev'd Matthew Anstey (wearing the chasuble)

We were fortunate to have recently published an authoritative article by Fr Peter Anson on church vestments in the Lent/Easter issue of The Tidings {entitled *"The 'haute couture' of the Church – Church Vestments (Part 2)"*}, so its timing and the acquisition of a new set of parish vestments is rather apposite. As Fr Peter pointed out in his article, Anglican liturgical colours symbolise different seasons and feast days throughout the Church year: white (gold) represents purity and joy, used during Christmas, Easter, and other high holy days (and weddings and funerals); purple symbolises penitence and preparation, used during Advent and Lent; green signifies growth and hope, used during 'Ordinary Time'; and red refers to the Holy Spirit and martyrdom, used during Pentecost and on feast days of martyrs (and for ordinations).

For our new vestments, the costs of a white (gold) set has been met from within a general bequest to the parish by Judith Lang (who died in July 2023); the red and green sets are being donated by John Needs in memory of his wife Robyn (who died in September 2024); and the purple set is donated by Rosemary Dare in memory of her husband Denis (who died in April 2024). The ashes of Judith, Robyn and Denis are all interred in our Memorial Garden. In the next issue of The Tidings, we will take a close look at each set of vestments.

SERVICES

SELECT DATES



- ❖ **Blessing of the Pets, Sunday 4th October** . . . 3.30 pm
- ❖ **Luke, Evangelist and Martyr, Sunday 18th October** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am
- ❖ **Disability Eucharist, Sunday 25th October** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am
- ❖ **All Saints Day, Sunday 1st November** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am
- ❖ **Christ the King, Sunday 22nd November** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am
- ❖ **Advent Sunday, 29th November** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am
- ❖ **Special Memorial Service, Sunday 29th November** . . . 3.30 pm
- ❖ **Festival of Lessons and Carols, Tuesday 15th December** . . . 8.30 pm. The Carol Service will be held in the church, followed by a supper in the main hall

'Quiet Place Meditation' Services: Tuesdays 5.00-5.45 pm – October 27th, November 24th, December 22nd



Christmas Services

- ❖ **Christmas Eve, Thursday 24th December** . . . 3.30 pm
- ❖ **Christmas Day, Friday 25th December** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am
- ❖ **Epiphany Sunday, 3rd January, 2027** . . . Holy Communion 8.00 am; Sung Eucharist 9.30 am

ANNUAL VESTRY MEETING

Our Annual Vestry meeting for 2027 will be held on February 21st, 2027 at 10.45 am in the church, immediately following the Sung Eucharist.

In Anglican polity, the Annual Vestry functions like an AGM. It hears reports, receives the financial statement for the previous year and passes the budget for the year ahead. There is the opportunity to ask questions from the reports; also items/motions for discussion and debate can be listed – *motions need to be submitted in writing with Rev'd Matthew by January 24th, 2027.*



The annual Vestry Meeting was held straight after the 9.30 am Sung Eucharist

It is also the meeting where parish officers are elected. This year the following positions fall vacant:

- ❖ People's Warden
- ❖ Parish Councillors (6)
- ❖ Auditor
- ❖ Nomination Committee [3]

Nomination forms will be available in the month prior, and *nominations close on February 7th, 2027.*

We endeavour to run efficient meetings, so generally the Vestry runs for no more than 45 minutes. Because of its importance in the administration and care of the parish, Vestry is a meeting all parishioners are encouraged to attend. If you have any questions please ask Matthew, one of the Wardens or a member of Parish Council.

'The Tidings' is the newsletter of the parish of St Theodore's Anglican Church, Toorak Gardens. It is published three times each year – the first issue in early February, and includes Lent and Easter; the second in June, and includes the Patronal Festival of St Theodore; and the third in December, and includes Advent and Christmas.

The Editor is **Dr Richard Keene** (ph: 0416-275-161; email: frkeene@me.com)

Comments/compliments/criticisms/contributions are always welcome



AN INVITATION

Hearth Gatherings:

encounters with mystics, poets and others who can light our way

Angela Hazebroek invites you to join others who are seeking to deepen their relationship with the One who creates, restores and sustains us. Give yourself some quiet time to reflect on the lives and teachings of holy men and women across all ages.

October Friday 23rd

Retreat Day

Theme: *Going to God with open, empty hands.* Guides: Henri Nouwen and Sister Ruth Burrows
Venue and time: The Chapel, Township Road, Marion Uniting Church (parking on site except for marked bays); commencing at 9.30 am and concluding at 4 pm
Cost: \$90 including morning tea, lunch and materials. Payment on the day by card or cash.
Registration by 16th October to angelaandjack@gmail.com



Saturday November 7th

Glory be to God . . . Poetry and Praise



Theme: *Poetry is the gateway to wonder and awe and the starting place for many of our songs of praise. **You are invited to send your favourite poem to Angela by November 1st** so we can explore the way poetry connects us to God and the cosmos in individual yet universal ways.*

Venue and time: St. Theodore's Anglican Church, Small Hall and Garden; 46 Prescott Terrace, Toorak Gardens; 11.00 am to 2 pm

Cost: Costs for Saturdays are \$25 covering materials and refreshments. Payment by card or cash on the day. RSVP one week before to angelaandjack@gmail.com

Tuesday December 1st and Wednesday December 2nd

Live-out Retreat: Two Days in Two Ways

Theme:

December 1st - Silence and Solitude

Is God calling you into silence and solitude? Do you long for the sounds of birds, the majesty of gum trees and the freedom to wander and wonder? This day can be a time for you to connect to the Creator and be astonished anew by the beauty that surrounds you.

December 2nd - Sharing our Journeys through Spiritual Conversation

Do you long to share your journey with God with others on a similar path? Are you comfortable with some quiet time but also enjoy conversation over meals and a semi-structured time for sharing? If so, this retreat may be for you.

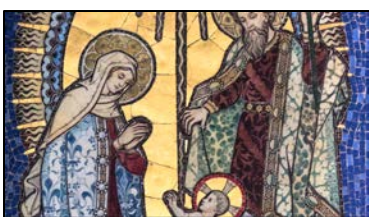
Venue: Brownhill Creek Recreation Park. BYO Lunch.

Cost: \$70.00 per day.



Saturday December 5th

Advent Preparations with the O Antiphons and Handel's Messiah



Theme: *Step back in time with these traditional expressions of our expectant waiting for the coming of the God who is with us. Take a break from the Christmas rush to be still.*

Venue and time: St. Theodore's Anglican Church, Small Hall and Garden; 46 Prescott Terrace, Toorak Gardens; 11.00 am to 2 pm

Cost: Costs for Saturdays are \$25 covering materials and refreshments. Payment by card or cash on the day. RSVP one week before to angelaandjack@gmail.com