



# *The Anglican Herald*

*The Anglican Catholic Church in Western Australia*

*Second Edition: No.9 – December 2019*

## Christmas Bells and Jingle Bells

Wouldn't it be wonderful to wake up on Christmas morning and hear the peal of bells from the churches in Perth calling people to come to Bethlehem and see this thing that the Lord has made known to us.

Excited children are busting to open their presents while mums and dads are trying to get the family ready to go to the Christmas Day Service. Dad tells the kids – you can open one present before we all go to church.

Perhaps the priest or minister will proclaim the good news that is the real reason we celebrate Christmas – the Saviour of the world was born on this day. On the other hand the sermon may simply be a plea to promote the spirit of the season and try to keep it throughout the New Year. So many Christmas sermons are all about having a happy time and have a safe holiday.

Don't hold your breathe. I doubt you will hear church bells and the majority of families will be doing many things totally unrelated to the true message that Christmas seeks to proclaim. Certainly in many churches the congregations will be larger than usual because it is Christmas; but even Christmas churchgoers are a relatively small percentage of the population.

The only bells you are likely to hear are the jingle bells of worn out so-called Christmas songs and the incessant bells in the shops as the retailers check the cash registers.

Yes indeed, Christmas is a wonderful time; it's just a pity that most people don't appreciate its real significance.

I think in many cases it is not a question of people not knowing the significance of Christmas – it is more a matter of people not knowing anything about God and/or Jesus Christ. It may be true that most people in Australia have heard about God but really they have only heard the name. We must come to terms with the fact that a good number of Australians have absolutely no idea of who God might be and if they've heard the Christmas story, they look upon the birth of Jesus as a fairy tale.

When many of us went to school we had a period called 'scripture'. The local church would send its priest, minister or some other person to talk about 'religious things'. It has been many, many years since scripture was taught in state schools. Even in many church schools periods on religion are few and far between. We must also understand that today's parents of young children have not experienced any religious programme during their school days.

### **The Christian Faith is no longer mentioned in many homes**

The simple truth is – the Church has a lot of work to do if we want to see God recognised and honoured in Australia. What do I mean when I say the Church? I mean you and me – we who call ourselves Christians and are members of the Body of Christ, the Church. If we have accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour we must also accept the mission that He has commanded us to undertake. I repeat the Bible passage from Matthew, which appeared in November's 'Anglican Herald'.

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

**CHRISTMAS IS A GOOD TIME TO THINK ABOUT THIS MATTER**

If we are still thinking about Christmas presents, have we thought of giving a Bible as a gift? Could we perhaps invite a friend to join us at Church on Christmas Day? Do we think about the message a Christian Christmas Card might convey to the recipient?

There are little things we could do at this Christmas time which may encourage our family and friends to at least give some thought to the importance of the life saving event which is the birth of Jesus. I'm not suggesting that we stand on the street corners and preach the word as the Salvation Army used to do. I am however trying to give some ideas about sharing our faith. That is what Jesus has asked us to do. Don't you think we should at least try?

### Speaking Personally

Those of you who have read my articles in '*The True Anglican*' Parish magazine and in '*The Anglican Herald*' will have noticed that I firmly believe in the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit, both in our own lives and in the life of the Church. Without the Holy Spirit the Church cannot function as it should.

John 16. 12-15

"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. <sup>13</sup>When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup>He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. <sup>15</sup>All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Acts 1. 4-5

And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup>for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

You can see from these two Bible passages how important the Holy Spirit is for the establishment and continuing life of the Church. We recall the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost – the birthday of the Church.

I have been a priest for 55 years (as noted in the November Prayer Diary) and while I was an assistant priest at St Andrew's Subiaco (where I was ordained) I had what I consider a personal experience of the work of the Holy Spirit.

I received a phone call from what I thought was King Edward Hospital asking me to call in to baptize a baby who was not expected to survive. When I arrived I was told that nobody from KEH had rung but as I was about to leave a message came that a baby had just been placed on the critical list and so I baptized the child who was in intensive care.

I realized that as KEH had not phoned me about a baptism the call must have come from PMH. I therefore went straight to PMH and indeed they had rung and so I baptized a child there.

I have always believed that my going to KEH by mistake was the work of the Holy Spirit so that both critically ill children could receive God's blessing through baptism.

---

As we draw near to Christmas we can be assured that the promised Holy Spirit is still with us both individually and within the Church. We will celebrate the birth of the Son of God and hopefully we will gain a deeper understanding of the wonder of God's love. God sent His Son into the world to save the world.

**This is the message we are called upon to proclaim**

Jesus is placing His trust in us by asking us to share in His mission. He has promised to provide all that is necessary to manage the task.

**Let us put our trust in Jesus and share the Good News**

