



## TASMANIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

PO Box 166, New Town, Tas. 7008  
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0418-3076-449

November, 2014

### The 'Lund' Principle

*Should not the churches act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?*

#### *From the President*



#### **EMMANUEL – the true spirit of Christmas**

Christmas is about the coming of our heavenly Creator to Earth. Advent is about preparing for His coming. In both seasons we use His birth in Bethlehem to look beyond earthly means to heavenly grace. That heavenly grace is seen (1) in the creative power of Jesus the Word of God, through whom all things were made, (2) in the humility of His incarnation in which He identifies with His own creation in the most intimate of manners, (3) in Christ's indwelling in the spirits, minds and bodies of those responsive to His call, and (4) in His astounding, triumphal return that we patiently and obediently await. All that we do as the Body of Christ, our witnessing, our evangelism,

our worship, even the administration of sacraments, are an interim measure, to come to an ultimate conclusion on that last day.

This is the hope that we have grasped, and that will withstand all the assaults of the enemies of Jesus Christ. It is this hope which unites us in spirit with the Christians murderously driven from the city of Mosul in Iraq, and in so many other settlements in that country and Syria. It is no accident that the massacre of the Holy Innocents (Matthew 2: 13-18) is a part of the Christmas story. Jesus Himself was forcibly made a refugee – He well knows the plight of His people. Whether we sing of Christ's glory in a cathedral or in a refugee camp tent this Christmas, we claim the victory of the cross of Christ over death, and we claim His gift of eternal life, a gift that nothing can take from us, because very simply the true spirit of Christmas is "Emmanuel", "God with us" (Isaiah 7: 14 and 8: 8, Matthew 1: 23). May you all know and be uplifted by the power of His presence this Christmas, that the whole world may joyfully awake to the dawn of His coming.

#### **SEEKERS OF A BETTER LIFE**

As the Christmas story relates, a traumatic and inevitable fall-out from regimes of persecution is the plight of those fleeing to a safer haven. The TCC is concerned that our governments, whilst protecting our national and State interests, also take a suitably generous and compassionate stance in policy and practice towards those who seek safety and who would loyally contribute their lives and livelihoods to our great country. We can do better. This too is in the heart of the spirit of Christmas.

#### **CHRISTMAS BOWL & IRAQ APPEALS**

The TCC promotes national appeals by the National Council of Churches in Australia's aid agency, Act for Peace. The Christmas Bowl Appeal raises money for the various aid programs conducted by the NCCA's Act for Peace, and the Iraq Appeal is for all those left bereft of material support by the wicked violence of ISIL. I commend these appeals to you.

#### **EMERGENCIES MINISTRY**

Pastor Gus Yearsley, the TCC's Emergencies Ministry Project Officer, has been busy co-ordinating the training of volunteers for this ministry and preparing for the call to mobilise these Personal Support workers in the event of a State emergency, as part of the State's Emergency Management Plan. See his report on page 2. Please uphold in prayer Gus and his volunteers in this critical ministry.

#### **RE-VAMPED TCC WEBSITE – <http://www.tctas.org.au>**

Our website was re-constructed and updated on 29 September, and I invite you to regularly visit it for news on what is happening ecumenically in Tasmania. I also invite you to contribute news of ecumenical events, especially forthcoming events, for publication in the "What's Happening" page of the website. Contributions should be sent to [tctas@bigpond.net.au](mailto:tctas@bigpond.net.au).

**David Morris, President, Tasmanian Council of Churches**



**The Tasmanian Council of Churches, its officers, staff, and member churches wish you, and all the members of your congregation, joyful Advent and Christmas seasons and a healthy and happy 2015.**





# Emergencies Ministry



*The TCC's new Emergencies Ministry logo.*



*A cartoon from The Mercury celebrating the spirit of courage and compassion in evidence among Tasmanians following the 2013 fires.*



*Pastor Gus Yearsley, the TCC's Emergencies Ministry Project Officer.*

## Emergencies Ministry Report

The TCC's Emergencies Ministry has recently trained another 13 Personal Support workers from 9 different churches around Hobart. These wonderful people join 80 or so others from faith communities across the State who are trained and ready to support people in times of crisis should the need arise.

One goal of the Emergencies Ministry (EM) is to train Personal Support workers from all 29 Tasmanian local council areas. Some of the smaller municipalities are not yet represented and, for the sake of those local communities, we are seeking volunteers from all areas of the State.

Paul Hueston and I recently represented the TCC at the VCC's EM conference in Melbourne, called Connect 2014. The speakers were informative and entertaining — from diverse backgrounds and perspectives, but they agreed on the importance of relationships and interconnectedness.

- Neil Robertson, the Chief Executive of Emergency Management Victoria, said, "Governments often jump to the hardware solution but the real solutions are in the relationships. The community itself offers solutions."
- David Tacey, Associate Professor of English at Latrobe Uni, said, "Jesus' story is the greatest story ever told. But only if your story has connected with Jesus' story. Then Jesus' story becomes your story."

These are powerful conference quotes about the importance of connecting with people and with faith. Our EM program seeks to train and deploy volunteers to connect with people in times of crisis and provide them with psychological first aid.

The two-day Personal Support training will be offered next year in Launceston (February), Devonport (March) and Hobart (May). For more information please contact me on 0432 620 253 or [emprojects@tctas.org.au](mailto:emprojects@tctas.org.au).

Gus Yearsley

## IN AN EMERGENCY:

If an emergency (either fire-related or otherwise) occurs, please listen for advice on ABC Local Radio, our emergency broadcaster in Tasmania. ABC Local Radio is found at AM 936 in Southern Tasmania and at FM 93.3 in Northern Tasmania.

If you have been trained and accredited as part of the TCC's Emergencies Ministry team, you will be called out if you are needed. Please ensure that Gus Yearsley is aware of any times when you are not contactable., by phoning him on 0432 620 253 or e-mailing [emprojects@tctas.org.au](mailto:emprojects@tctas.org.au). If you can't contact Gus, please inform Bob Faser on 0418 307 449.

# Praying, Worshipping, and Learning Together

## Multifaith Gathering for Human Rights Week

The monthly gathering for November for Religions for Peace (Tasmanian Branch) will be held on Sunday 30 November, from 2.30 to 4.00pm at the University of Tasmania's Multifaith Centre, in the TUU Building, Churchill Ave, Sandy Bay.

The event will be part of Human Rights Week and will have the title 'Faiths Respecting Refugees'.

The keynote speaker will be Father Shammi Perera, who is originally from Sri Lanka and who is now the chaplain with responsibility for the pastoral care of migrants and refugees, based at St Mary's Cathedral, Hobart.

He will speak about the treatment of strangers (which includes immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees) in faith traditions and we will spend time sharing readings and prayers/meditations both for those forced to take refuge and for those creating the conditions that force others to take refuge.

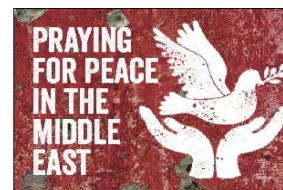


## Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

An ecumenical service to pray for peace in the Middle East will be held on Thursday, 20th November, at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Launceston, at 6:00 p.m.

The service is being organised by representatives of a number of Launceston-area churches, brought together by the Rector of Holy Trinity, the Rev'd Warwick Cuthbertson.

A homily will be given by the TCC's Liaison Officer, the Rev. Dr. Bob Faser.



LAUNCESTON, TASMANIA  
ECUMENICAL SERVICE  
to pray for peace in the lands  
of the Middle East

6.00 p.m.  
THURSDAY, 20TH NOVEMBER 2014

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH  
CORNER OF CAMERON & GEORGE STREETS

For further information, telephone (03) 6331 4460  
or email [wicuth1@bigpond.com](mailto:wicuth1@bigpond.com)



## Pints of Faith

**Pints of Faith** continues as a gathering for young adults offered by Catholic Youth Ministry Tasmania.

In Hobart, **Pints of Faith** takes place at the Soho Hotel, normally on the first Thursday evening of the month, from 6:30 until 9:00.

In Launceston, **Pints of Faith** will happen, as announced, at the Cock and Bull British Pub.

Please ring Catholic Youth Ministry on 6208-6274 for more information about **Pints of Faith**, and other CYM programmes.

## Worship in the RHH Chapel

Frequent opportunities for worship are available to patients, family members, other visitors, and staff at the Royal Hobart Hospital. The Hospital Chapel is located on the first floor of the Hospital.

A Catholic Mass is celebrated three times a week in the Chapel, at 5:00 p.m. on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and at 4:30 p.m. on Sundays., by the Hospital's Catholic Chaplain, Father Gerald Quinn.

A services of worship is held on Sundays at 11:00 a.m. in the Chapel, with leadership of his service alternating weekly among chaplains appointed by the Anglican, Presbyterian, and Uniting Churches.

A brief gathering for prayer is also held at 9:15 in the Chapel most weekday mornings.



# Praying, Worshipping, and Learning Together

## Sunday Evenings at All Saints' during Advent

During Advent, the Sunday evening services at All Saints' Anglican Church, Macquarie Street, South Hobart, will be at 7:00 p.m., as follows:

Advent 1 (30 November): Advent Carols in Procession (with the Choir)

Advent 2 (7 December): Advent Service of Hope and Expectation

Advent 3 (14 December): Taizé Prayer for Advent and Christmas



Advent 4 (21 December): Service of Nine Lessons and Carols (with the Choir).

All are welcome!

## Lessons and Carols in North Hobart



A service of Lessons and Carols will be held at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Warwick Street, North Hobart, on Friday, 12th December, at 7:00 p.m..

All are welcome!

## Our improved TCC website.

Please visit the TCC's website at <http://www.tcctas.org.au/>.

Many improvements have been made in the site to make it a much more useful and useable resource for the Christian communities of Tasmania.

Particular thanks to the TCC's President, David Morris, for his work in organising the improved website.

## Lessons and Carols in Sorell

Another service of Lessons and Carols will be held at Scots' Uniting Church, Arthur Street, Sorell, on Sunday, 21st December, at 10:00 a.m.,

All are welcome!

## God's Gossip

*God's Gossip* is a new Tasmanian Christian website, developed by Penny Edman.

According to the site's introduction, *God's Gossip* aims to be "an oasis of support, encouragement, and discovery".

You are encouraged to visit the site at <http://godsgossip.com.au>.

## Advent Retreat 2014 "Preparing the Way"



Where? Woodbridge Uniting Church and environment

When? Saturday November 29th: 10:00am – 3:00pm

Who? While this is planned by the Uniting Church, people from other churches, or no church, are also encouraged to attend.

Cost? Your time and a plate of lunch to share (or we might go to Peppermint Bay for lunch if the group would prefer this option)

Contact? Rev Adelene Mills ph. 62299859

RSVP by 25th November please

## JFH Summer School

Jane Franklin Hall will hold its annual Summer School from the 4th to the 24th of January. JFH is a co-educational residential college for the University of Tasmania (Hobart campus), and an affiliated body of the Tasmanian Council of Churches. The courses offered are all of one week's duration, on a variety of interesting topics, and will suit the needs of committed adult learners. Further information on each course is available by visiting the JFH Summer School website at [www.jane.edu.au/summer-school/](http://www.jane.edu.au/summer-school/).

### THE ADVENT POLICE





### ***IRAQ CRISIS APPEAL***

In the past few months, violence has been spreading across Iraq, resulting in an urgent humanitarian crisis. We are deeply concerned by the reports of indiscriminate and extrajudicial killings. Minorities in Iraq, including Christians, are particularly vulnerable as sectarian tensions increase. Over 1 million civilians, mostly women and children, have been forced to flee their homes. Most have fled with nothing and urgently need help now.

Through our partner on the ground, **Act for Peace** is responding fast to the crisis by providing food parcels, hygiene kits, blankets and cooking sets, but we urgently need more funds to scale up our response.

Two camps are being established in Erbil and Dohuk to provide much needed shelter to displaced families. But the demand is great and many people are currently living in schools, mosques, tents, abandoned buildings and open public spaces. Terrified and homeless, families are exposed to searing heat, often without anything to eat or drink.

Please give generously to support displaced families today. -

See more at: <http://www.actforpeace.org.au/Get-Involved/Our-latest-appeals/Iraq-Crisis-Appeal#sthash.zuflSP3N.dpuf>, or ring 1800 025 101.

## **Praying, Worshipping, and Learning Together**

*Here are two opportunities offered by the Sisters of the Immaculata, and open to young adults from all denominations.*

### **The Immaculata Mission School is open for registrations!**

*We invite you to spend nine days with us in prayer, fellowship, learning ... starting the new year with Christ!*

IMS 2015 will be held in Melbourne (at the Sacred Heart Retreat Centre, Croydon) and will include speakers like:

Archbishop Julian Porteous, Archbishop of Hobart

Fr. Albert Wasniowski OSPPE, Australian Provincial of the Pauline Fathers

Fr. Anthony Bernard, Parish Priest of St. Joseph's Camperdown  
Dr. Adam Cooper, Lecturer at John Paul II Institute for Marriage and Family

Anna Krohn, Women's Liaison Officer for the Archdiocese of Melbourne

Sam Clear, Adventurer & Speaker who walked 15,600km around the world for Christian unity  
... and many more!

To register, visit

<http://www.sistersoftheimmaculata.org.au/ims-2015>

### **Set a FIRE down in my soul!**

For all young adults aged between 15-30 years old, you are invited to **FIRE**, a weekend retreat, at Sacred Heart Church, New Town.

**Speakers include:** Archbishop Julian Porteous, Sisters of the Immaculata, Ryan Kay, Jess Leach and **international guest speaker, Fr Anthony Mary, Community of Saint John.**

**When?** Friday, 28 November (6.30pm Gathering for a 7pm start) to Sunday, 30 November.

**Cost?** \$20 (includes Friday night, light supper; Saturday, main meals; and Sunday, morning tea).

**For more information or to register:** Phone [0406372608](tel:0406372608) or email [firetreattas@gmail.com](mailto:firetreattas@gmail.com)



**Thank you for supporting the Christmas Bowl in 2013-2104! With the help of the Christmas Bowl, our *Act for Peace* project partners assist more than one million people living in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Pacific & Australia.**



*Photo: During the children's talk at the 2012 Christmas Bowl launch at Hobart North Uniting Church.*

### **What is the Christmas Bowl?**

It all started on Christmas Day in 1949, when the Reverend Frank Byatt, minister of the Methodist Church in Williamstown, Victoria, (who previously served congregations in Westbury and Glenorchy in Tasmania) placed an empty bowl on the dinner table and asked those present to give what they considered to be the cost of the meal. Frank urged his guests to reflect on their good fortunes and encouraged them to do something selfless to bring relief and hope to refugees who had fled the horrors of World War II.

65 years later and the Christmas Bowl appeal has grown to become a much-loved ecumenical tradition. For the 2,000 churches from 19 denominations who now take part each year, it is an essential part of our Christmas celebrations. It's how we as Australian Christians come together to share God's gift of love and hope with people around the world who need it most.

The Christmas Bowl appeal has a proud history of bringing Christians together to act in solidarity with communities threatened by conflict and disaster. Together, we came to the aid of those starving during the 1985 Ethiopian famine. We gave comfort to people devastated by the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami. And today we are standing alongside the 50 million refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people worldwide.

This is the highest number of displaced people since World War II, and since the Christmas Bowl appeal began. Sadly, this shows us that the Christmas Bowl is needed as much today as it ever has been, and remains a vital link between those who have enough and those who are less fortunate.

**STOP PRESS:** Sieneke Martin, acting Director of the NCCA's *Act for Peace* Commission (and a former Director of *Quaker Service Australia* (during which time she lived and worked in Tasmania) will speak about *Act for Peace* at All Saints' Anglican Church, South Hobart, on Friday, 14th November at 7:30 p.m. We will meet in the Hawker Centre (behind the church). Please promote this gathering widely among your congregation and other networks.

**If your congregation has not yet received a Christmas Bowl promotional kit (including posters and envelopes) please ring the TCC at 0418-307-449 as soon as possible.**

**The TCC also has a small supply of extra Christmas Bowl envelopes if your congregation needs more envelopes than you've received (or if you can use some envelopes for a special event. Please ring 0418-307-449.**

**As well, we have some corflute Christmas Bowl signs, suitable for outdoor use. If you need one (or more!), please ring 0418-307-449.**



## Why not give a gift that will help rebuild lives?



For Christmas, birthdays, anniversaries, Mother's and Father's Day or for any occasion that calls for a meaningful gift, why not give a gift that will help rebuild lives?

For every **Gift for Peace** you order, you'll receive a colourful greeting card with a matching fridge magnet— so that your loved ones have a keepsake to remember your thoughtful gift forever.

All cards tell a story about one of the programs where your gift is helping, with beautiful images and a colour-

ful fabric pattern from the country featured on the card.

To order, please ring **Act for Peace** today on 1800 025 101 or visit the Act for Peace website (<http://www.actforpeace.org.au>) to order online. Please allow up to two weeks for processing and postage of your gift.



Your gift will help people who seek safety, security and peace. Give a gift that makes a lasting difference!

Gifts range from \$10 (education about the risk of landmines for children in South Sudan) to \$3,750 (a rain water tank in Tonga or Vanuatu), but the majority of gifts range from \$20 to \$75.

In the event of a particular item being over-subscribed, **Act for Peace** will redirect your gift to other needs of the same region or to an equally worthwhile project.



## *“Love Makes A Way” in Launceston*



Over thirty Christians, representing six denominations, participated in the planning and implementation of a nonviolent civil disobedience action in Launceston on 6 October. The action called upon the Australian government to commit to a timetabled release of all asylum seeker children into the Australian community.

A team of eight held a prayer vigil inside the waiting area of the offices of the Hon. Andrew Nikolic, Member for Bass. Police were called but no arrests were made.

A vigil was also held on the street outside the electorate office with ten to fifteen participating throughout the day. The vigils ended peacefully after seven and a half hours.

Vigilliers were encouraged by the amazingly positive responses they received from passers-by. They estimate that at least 90% were very supportive of the stance being taken.

The action also received widespread and generally positive media coverage – on two radio stations, two TV channels and both two newspapers.

Love Makes A Way is named in response to the federal government’s “No Way” advertising campaign. Actions have been held around the nation drawing attention to the nation’s unacceptable policies. The actions also call upon churches to speak out more clearly.

More actions are being contemplated around the nation, including in Tasmania. To find out more contact Jeff McKinnon at [jeff@citybaptistchurch.net](mailto:jeff@citybaptistchurch.net) or 0403 310 501.

Jeff McKinnon,  
Baptist Pastor.



# Ministry with asylum seekers in Hobart

## MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO SEEK ASYLUM

by Brother Sean McManus

In September 2011, Asylum Seekers began coming to Tasmania. At first they were Afghani Hazara men who had come to Australia by boat from Indonesia, seeking protection from the barbarities of the Taliban and other persecutors. With other members of Tasmanian Asylum Seeker Support I began visiting the Pontville Detention Centre. We would often visit twice a week – once with one or two of the men, then on Tuesday night, “Party” Night when everyone asked to see as many men as they could. We would join up all the tables which were covered in food. Pistachios, dates, and star anise tea were frequent offerings. Many readers would have seen *Mary Meets Mohammad*, a wonderful true story of transformation that comes from that era of Pontville’s existence.

Pontville closed at the end of February 2012 and many men were granted protection and a Permanent Visa, and moved into the community. Pontville reopened in late 2012, morphing into an APOD (Alternative Place of Detention) for asylum seeker lads under 18 until it closed around the time of the election when the Coalition gained power. At that time adults were being released with Bridging Visas. Men were Hazaras from Iran and Quetta (Pakistani), Iraqis, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis.



Several of us visitors started to meet the men on Bridging Visas as they moved into the Hobart community, often living initially in Backpackers Accommodation. The *Bridging Visa Social Club* was born. We started the practice of meeting every Saturday from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. or later. Favorite trips were to the pinnacle of Wellington followed by musical picnics in front of a roaring fire in The Chalet. One delightful afternoon there, we were snowed-out, oblivious to the fact that no other cars were going up the mountain.

Two years later the Saturday afternoons with asylum seeker friends continue, now based at the Amnesty International rooms

in Macquarie St. Policies have changed, people have moved to and from Tasmania. Currently (November 2014), there are about 60-70 people in Hobart who came by boat seeking protection and who are on Bridging Visas. They are not allowed to work or study. Among them are a number of families, many of them of Kurdish origin. We still manage occasional excursions: to a TSO performance; to a play about Refugees; to an event at MONA; to see Targa Tasmania cars; to the Walk Together event, and more. On the third Saturday of each month, collection of community groups runs a Potluck Supper with asylum seekers and refugees at the Church of Christ in the City, where food, friendship, music and dance are shared.



Between times, many of us support the men or families in smaller ways – helping them to find volunteer positions, helping them with driving practice, experimenting with cooking, helping move into or out of rental or other accommodation.

Communication is a challenge. My proficiency in Hazaraghi is only the word *tashakoor* (thank you), and I know that if I say the Persian word *kukoo* I get a delicious something akin to a veggie burger. But the men and the women struggle and manage to improve their English.



Among the people seeking asylum that I know in Tasmania there are the following skills and professions: artist, painter, computer engineer, electrician, design engineer (logistics), long- distance truck driver, lawyer, director of small engineering enterprise, labourers, builders, hairdressers, market gardener, tugboat engineer, teacher of English and much more. How do they cope when they are not allowed to work or study?

They struggle with boredom, with lack of progress in their cases, with lack of hope and with the inevitable depression. They look after each other, they visit, play music, talk, and share food. They welcome visitors and share what they have. They are given a special allowance which amounts to about 35% of the minimum wage. Many have had the opportunity to volunteer their services, often to community organisations, even to the extent of being part of the group welcoming Humanitarian Arrivals coming to Hobart as part of

Australia’s Refugee Resettlement program.

(continued on next page)

## Ministry with asylum seekers in Hobart (continued)

*(Continued from the previous page:)*



A number of those seeking asylum have shown courage and generosity in speaking to community groups such as the Catholic Women's League and the staff of the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office and more. Meeting people cuts through stereotypes and is far better than an argument about whether they are "real" refugees. In my work with young people in schools such as St Patrick's College Launceston and St Brendan Shaw College Devonport, as well as with Edmund Rice Camps, I have been able to introduce asylum seeker men, who share their story. Despite the halting English, their combined efforts convey a powerful sense of shared humanity. Always in these gatherings, the response is warm, interested and affirming. Recently one of the men, speaking on behalf of his companions, said of the Devonport students, "They are clever and... caring" as he put his hand to his heart.

Another privilege for me has been sharing a sense of the spiritual. Many of the people seeking asylum demonstrate a strong sense of prayer and of the spiritual in their lives. There is a strong awareness of seasons in their religious/spiritual life such as the times of Ramadan, or Muharram and the remembrance of Ashura especially by Shia Muslims which include most of the asylum seekers. Also there are those who have explored Christianity, and those who have been baptized. They knew that their interest in Jesus and Christianity could get them killed in their home country.

A number of schools and churches and other religious groups have quietly extended a welcome to people seeking asylum. I was inspired recently at the Graduation Ceremony of a Tasmanian Catholic college, where one of their students introduced himself to the audience by his name and "Boat Number", and spoke briefly of the previous two years when his life has been lived on the circuit of Detention Centres at Pontville, Yongah Hill (outside Kalgoorlie), Christmas Island and Wickham Point (Darwin). Now he is able to get his feet under a school desk and deal with the normality of subjects and education and life of any older Australian teenager.

I have been given a blessed opportunity to meet the divine in the stranger, in our mutual welcome, and in the breaking and sharing of food.

Brother Sean McManus

*Brother Sean is a Hobart-born member of the Christian Brothers, a Catholic Religious order. He has worked much of his life in education, mostly in Melbourne, but also in Tasmania and in Tanzania, East Africa.*



*Longing, separation - Portrait of an Afghani asylum seeker in Tasmania,  
by Sarah Molnar for Guilford Young College Art Exhibition*

*(Other photos in this article are of activities of the "Bridging Visas Social Club".)*

# A hymn of concern for Asylum Seekers



*The biblical image of the “Flight to Egypt” reminds us that the infant Jesus, along with Mary and Joseph, was an asylum seeker.*

**Kyrie eleison.**

**Christe eleison.**

**Kyrie eleison.**

O God of mercy, at whose call  
the ocean waters rise and fall,  
protect the people on the sea  
who from oppression seek to flee.  
O hear us as our prayers we speak  
for those who safe asylum seek.

They come from lands where tyrants reign  
to seek a refuge from their pain.  
They look to us to give them scope  
to build a life of peace and hope.  
O hear us as our prayers we speak  
for those who safe asylum seek.

Yet politicians mock their plight  
and commentators whip up fright.  
Now let their noise and lies depart:  
convert each demagogic heart!  
O hear us as our prayers we speak  
for those who safe asylum seek.

God bless this nation, “girt by sea”,  
with broader hospitality.  
May gen’rous hearts around this land  
obey with love your great command.  
O hear us as our prayers we speak  
for those who safe asylum seek.

Robert J. Faser, 2014  
Tune: *Melita*, 88.88.88

I wrote this hymn in June in response to news reports of a boat of asylum seekers being in distress off the coast of Christmas Island and of the inaction of the government in response to this tragedy-in-the-making. The inaction of the government is all the more tragic, given the prominence in the current government of politicians who wear their Christian faith on their sleeves.

I wrote it with the hymn “Eternal Father, strong to save ...” (*Together in Song*, 138) in mind, with the repeated refrain: “O hear us as we cry to Thee / for those in peril on the sea.” As a result, the hymn is written for the tune *Melita*.

While I write this hymn as a Christian, I’ve deliberately written it as a hymn that can be sung with integrity by Christians, Jews, Muslims, and other people of faith.

This hymn is available free-of-charge to any congregation, denomination, ecumenical gathering, or interfaith gathering who wishes to use it in worship, particularly in a service focusing on our response as people of faith to asylum seekers.

**RJF**



## From the Liaison Officer

**Advent is not Lent. (I'll repeat that. It's important.) Advent is NOT Lent!**

If I said one thing to you about worship in Advent, it would be this:

Advent is not Lent.

I'll repeat this. It's important.

Advent is NOT Lent.

During Advent, the Christian church progressively “grows into” the brightness of the Christmas celebration. The trajectory of Advent moves in the direction of Christmas. The visual image here is the Advent wreath, on which an additional candle is lit each Sunday of Advent: one on the first Sunday, two on the second, ... and so on. The light of Advent grows, until it is absorbed into the light of Christmas.

In contrast, Lent moves in the direction, not of Easter, but of Good Friday. Throughout Lent, we move deeper and deeper into the shadow of the Cross. Easter comes afterwards, not as part of the basic trajectory of Lent, but as God's great reversal of the pain of the Cross. The basic inner logic of Lent leads to Good Friday, with Easter following as God's great Reversal, as God's great vindication of the Crucified One. There is a marked discontinuity between Lent and Easter.

The relationship of Advent with Christmas is radically different from the relationship of Lent with Easter. The discontinuity is not there. Advent flows almost organically into Christmas.

As a result, any attempt to remake Advent as a penitential season in the image of Lent is incompetent liturgy.

Some things which make perfect liturgical sense in Lent which, when transposed into Advent, become faintly ridiculous.

For example, the hymns of Lent/Holy Week and the hymns of Easter do not overlap. It makes no sense liturgically to sing Resurrection-related hymns on Good Friday (or earlier in Lent/Holy Week). Neither does it make sense to sing Crucifixion-related hymns on Easter Day (or later in the Easter season). When we begin to sing “Christ the Lord is risen today” or “Yours be the glory”, we've already put “O sacred head sore wounded” and “When I survey the wondrous cross” to rest at least until the following Lent.

My “liturgical fundamentalist” friends will not be happy when I say this, but I believe that one of the ways the Church “grows into” Christmas during Advent is in our music during worship. The hymns of Advent and the hymns of Christmas should be able to co-exist for much of Advent, with a growing use of specifically Christmas music each Sunday, just as we light more candles on our Advent wreaths.

For example, in a congregation that sings four hymns in worship on a typical Sunday,

- On the First Sunday of Advent, it's appropriate to sing four Advent hymns and no Christmas hymns.
- On the Second Sunday of Advent, it's appropriate to sing three Advent hymns and one Christmas hymn.
- On the Third Sunday of Advent, it's appropriate to sing two Advent hymns and two Christmas hymns.
- On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, it's appropriate to sing one Advent hymn and three Christmas hymns.

Of course, this pattern may be interrupted in some congregations because, on one or more of the Sundays in Advent, the worship service is taken over for a children's Christmas pageant, a youth group musical, or the Sunday School's annual extravaganza. Nevertheless, the idea of Advent being a time of “growing into” Christmas is still useful in a congregation whose Advent involves only three functional worshipping Sundays.

And, in the words with which I began this article, if I said one thing to you about worship in Advent, it would be this:

Advent is NOT Lent..

Rev. Dr. Bob Faser,  
Liaison Officer, Tasmanian Council of Churches

(You may also want to read Bob's blog “*A funny thing happened on the way ...*”, which can be found at <http://revdocbob.blogspot.com.au>.)

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