

CHRISTMAS 2016

VOICE

ST SWITHUN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, PYMBLE



TO THE WORLD?

JOY IN LEARNING

They're a lively bunch of young people, Year 5 and up, who meet term time on Fridays, 6:30-8:30pm, enjoy food, play messy games and favourite sports, love welcoming new friends, and learning more and more from the Bible. Through it all endless questions and discussions about Jesus happen, and there's joy in learning and discovering that when the angel announced that he had a message of great joy for all people - that the Saviour of the world was born - it really is a message that continues to bring joy to the world.



JOY IN CHILDREN

Every Tuesday at 10am our church is filled with lots of happy little people enjoying singing some fabulous songs, playing instruments, throwing beanbags, dancing and enjoying learning through music. Mainly Music is for Mums, Dads, grandparents or nannies who enjoy music, chatting, home baked goodies, tea/coffee, and spending time with your little ones. All are welcome!



JOY IN GIVING

This Christmas, a beautiful little angel, handmade by Swiz Knitters, will be given to every child who enjoys Mainly Music at Swiz. Jumpers, beanies and toys have been knitted for newborn babies in Asia. And on Anzac Day every person who becomes an Australian citizen in Kuringai will receive a small knitted koala or a miniature stocking striped green and gold! The frail-aged in our community are not forgotten – bed sox are always welcome!



Volunteer artists, knitters and crafters gather on the first Wednesday morning each month, enjoy a coffee, and proceed to do something creative. It's a No Stress group. Artists and knitters bring their own materials. Other church members donate wool or craft materials. Creative gifts bring joy to those who give and to those who will receive!

JOY IN GRIEF

After 44 happy years of married life, this will be Sheila's first Christmas without her beloved Alan. Her response to that potential trauma is, "We had 8 bonus years!" Eight years ago Alan was diagnosed with "inoperable" prostate cancer. A second specialist, Professor Henry Woo not only operated successfully but also arranged for Alan to be the first Aussie accepted for drug trials on three occasions.

Since childhood Sheila has been confident in God's plans for her life. She was born in Hong Kong and in 1940 she was one of thousands of women and children evacuated to Australia. In 1945 they were repatriated on a troop ship to the UK, where Sheila was left in a boarding school. In 1948 she embarked on a Sunderland flying boat with the first load of



children rejoining their parents. There were five overnight stops to Hong Kong! Three years later, she flew to school in Sydney, this time on a Qantas flight. The Braga family later settled in Australia.

Sheila has found that in every circumstance she can trust in God – even in grief. She enjoyed a condolence letter which said, 'Because of your age, your bereavement will be brief. You will soon be reunited with Alan.'



The second verse of the lyrics of Advance Australia Fair holds special meaning for former migrants from Singapore, Mirabel and Eric Ng. They are glad to have come to this beautiful land and say Australia is like the promised land of biblical times - a land of milk and honey!

Mirabel arrived here alone and worked for a branch of the bank she worked for in Singapore. She later married and had three children. In 1998 she reluctantly accepted an invitation to church even though she'd rejected the Christian faith several times. But that day she believed in the truth of the Bible and with great joy became a Christian.

JOY IN NEW BEGINNINGS

Westpac sponsored Eric, his wife and son, in 1987. He says it was a 'miracle' as the job was offered with a Permanent Residency sponsorship within two weeks, but he adds that the family did experience the migrant's trauma of learning about cultural differences and things like knowing where to live. Eric is still grateful that God gave him the wisdom and courage to set up his own management consulting business.

After their respective spouses had passed away, Mirabel and Eric, who had been church friends for 18 years, were married in 2012.

In a country where newcomers struggle with our language and culture, our Everyday English group seem to have no trouble at all making friends and looking out for each other, despite their different backgrounds. Discovering the meaning of a saying of Jesus can be quite confusing. One man was astonished that Jesus should go in search of a lost sheep and then bring it home rejoicing. Then the penny dropped. Kindness! It's the kindness of God that welcomes lost sinners!



JOY IN FRIENDSHIP

JOY

Joy is the serious business of Heaven.

IN QUOTATIONS

— C.S Lewis

Joy multiplies when it is shared among friends. To get the full value of joy you must share it with someone.

— Mark Twain

I slept and I dreamed that life is all joy. I woke and I saw that life is all service. I served and I saw that service is joy.

— Kahlil Gibran

There is not one blade of grass, there is no color in this world that is not intended to make us joyful.

— John Calvin



Every year I receive Christmas cards showing snowflakes or stars shining over Bethlehem with the words 'Joy to the World'. But my reading of the historic record of that first Christmas tells me that it was a very strange Christmas – a bit like being born in Aleppo today.

Jesus, a newborn, arrived into a very dangerous world. He was placed on straw in the animals' feed trough, while a despot called

Herod sat on the throne of Judaea. The whole of the Middle East was under the ruthless control of the Roman Emperor Augustus.

Fast forward 2,000 years and the Middle East is still very dangerous. Could I send a card to my friends there with the caption, 'Joy to the world'? There's no joy when your city has been destroyed; your whole family are refugees; foreign countries are not happy about welcoming you, and you live day after day knowing that there's almost no hope of going somewhere peaceful. It's easy for us Australians to say 'Joy to the World' at Christmas: we live in our little world of safety, stable government, welfare, and, for almost everyone, a roof over our heads, plus Christmas cards that say 'Joy to the World'!

So... should I send this 'Christian' card which may offend someone who doesn't want to know about Jesus, or should I go for the easy option: 'Seasons Greetings'? Once again I will decide that I cannot send a card that has no meaning.

Knowing it is the truth, we will again sing: 'Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her king!' When Isaac Watts wrote those words he was quoting an angel in Luke chapter 2. The angel spoke those words to shepherds near Bethlehem. The angel said they would find the baby in a manger. Shepherds knew all about mangers and about laying an infant on straw in a feed trough. Shepherds, despised for being mere labourers, were the first to be given the news which Queens, Kings, and the rest of us continue to celebrate.

God gave us the biggest ever Christmas surprise! He came into this world as a baby: God in the flesh. He came into a dangerous world to do what no-one else could achieve: to destroy evil and death, and to invite us and welcome us into a relationship with God. The Christmas message is about the Saviour of the world.

That's why we will again be glad to sing 'Joy to the World.' We look forward to your singing it with us this Christmas!

Rev. Dr. Roger Chilton
Senior Minister

JOY TO THE WORLD?