

## ***Minister's Musings***

### ***Holiday Season! Thanksgiving - Advent - Christmas***

#### ***Thanksgiving***

For our brothers and sisters in the northern hemisphere, and especially in North America, this week begins the holiday season, with the celebration of Thanksgiving - remembering the pilgrims who left Europe and travelled to the new world to build a new life, free from religious persecution.

#### ***Advent***

Advent is a time of preparation for one of the "great" Christian feast days, Christmas. Traditionally, Advent runs for the four Sundays leading up to Christmas Day, although the Celtic Church celebrates Advent for 40 days, reflecting the length of the season of preparation for Easter (Lent).

In our tradition, each of the four Sundays is given a theme: peace, hope, joy and love. Each Sunday we light one of the candles in the Advent Wreath to focus our attention.



In our times of worship this year, we will be exploring the stories of some of the women in Jesus' family tree. These stories are both scandalous and challenging. Why not join us at Kiama on Sundays at 9.30am?

#### ***St Nicholas - 6 December***

In Europe, the Feast of St Nicholas on 6 December is also important. St Nicholas lived in Turkey in the 4th century. It is thought he was the Bishop of Myrna in southern Turkey. He was known for loving and caring for children and he fed the hungry, healed the sick and cared for the oppressed. At one time, he saved 3 young women who had no money and were desperate. In their destitution, they had turned to prostitution to survive. It is said that Nicholas threw money in their window (as one story goes) or tossed it down a chimney (as goes another), with the money landing in stockings hanging by the fire. Tradition says that this gift of money spared and rescued the women from poverty.

Today, our Christmas celebrations are infused with a mash-up of the idea of St Nicholas, a poem written in the early 1800s by Clement Clarke Moore (*'Twas the Night Before Christmas*) and the figure we have come to know as Santa Claus (a creation of Coca-Cola as an advertising gimmick in the 1920s).

## **Quiet Christmas**

The season of preparation and celebration can be hard when life is a struggle. The emphasis on getting together with friends and family can be painful when someone we love is no longer with us whether due to death, estrangement or simply the many of life's adventures taking us away from our family and friends at this time. It is important that we acknowledge that Christmas is not a happy time for everyone - so we offer a space (Tuesday 20 December at 7.30pm) for you to come and sit quietly and to allow yourself to be surrounded in prayer and the support of one another and to wonder with us about the love of the God who enters our world of struggle and walks with us.

## ***Christmas***

Christmas Day is a "high holiday". It is the celebration of the the birth of Jesus, the Christ. The celebration begins on Christmas Eve - usually with a service of candle-lighting and Communion - celebrating the coming of the "Light of the World" (see John 1:1-5 and John 8:12). The celebration continues on Christmas Day, and then for 12 days (the 12 Days of Christmas), ending on 6 January when we remember the the Magi (the wise ones) who came from a distant place to visit Jesus and his family.

If you haven't read the Christmas stories for yourself in a while, can I encourage you to look them up: Matthew 1:18-2:23 and Luke 2:1-20 (21-40).

Rev Kath Merrifield  
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