

Hospitable Kingdom

Lent 2021

Weekly reflections on the Hospitable Kingdom sculpture of St Barnabas, Kalamunda, and the church's role in our community in uncertain times. Suitable for personal or group study.



Hopefully, this year, we can gather together
over the entire Lent and Easter journey.
Something that was rudely interrupted last year!
Possibly, there will be some degree of restrictions
impacting on how we gather.
This does not have to stop us from experiencing
a reflective and exciting journey, using what we know and learn,
by engaging in the ancient custom of adopting a
Lenten discipline as a focus leading up to
Easter, through reflection, readings and response.
Keep in mind the purpose of a Lenten program is to
invoke a reflective attitude of humility, simple living and prayer,
not an onerous time of rigid rules and strict discipline.
Growing your personal understanding of the season,
doing your bit to develop a collaborative response to our theme,
or participating with your full ability will
make our Lenten journey to Easter a fruitful experience!

Let us pray

Blessed be God who lifts us up.
Blessed be the Father of heaven.
Blessed be the risen and ascended Lord.
Blessed be the Christ in glory.
Blessed be the Spirit of Truth and Love.
Blessed be the Holy Spirit.

Bless us this day with vision.
Bless us this day with faith.
May this place be a sacred place,
a telling place,
where earth and heaven meet.

Telling Place Community team¹

¹ The Northumbria Community Trust, *Celtic Daily Prayer, Book Two : Farther Up and Farther In* (London: William Collins, 2015).

Introduction

At the back of our church stands a wire and cloth sculpture titled, "The Hospitable Kingdom." It is large and colourful, and this year is to be the focal point of Lent.

This idea raised many questions in my head.

What does hospitable mean?

Is the concept of the Hospitable Kingdom a model for us to follow or a state of being that awaits us or is it like the act of grace, something we receive? Does it already exist, or do we have to shape it?

I am interested in the interaction between local parish churches and the geographical community, particularly the role local parish churches can have in building community resilience. Where does the Hospitable Kingdom fit here?

Community resilience can be described in a couple of different ways. The first is a community's ability to "bounce back" after a disaster, for example, rebuilding after a bushfire. The second is the community's ability to change over time in response to more subtle threats to its existence. An example of this is how Bickley Valley and Pickering Brook's orchard growing areas have diversified and adapted to changes in consumer demands, climate, and technology. Drive through that area now. You will find orchards with a packing shed outlet, others with pick your own fruit days. Others are converted to vineyards and wineries providing excellent cafes and restaurants and entertainment venues, and others the cider places. This skill in reusing the land, soil, weather conditions to continue food production, but in an entirely different manner, is resilience.

This study program will lead you to reflect on what the Hospitable Kingdom means to you and what that means for your community. It will also raise questions on how St Barnabas' presence can add to our community and resilience to threats like bushfires or a downturn in the economy.

So, for this Lenten study, the Hospitable Kingdom focus is here, in this place, in our local communities. It is also in the now; this health emergency time we cannot escape from, even when we want to. We are in a global pandemic. It has disrupted our lives. As I write this, my face mask is on the table, ready to be worn when I go outside the Rectory's front door. I cannot ignore the COVID-19 pandemic when I reflect on the Hospitable Kingdom for two reasons. Firstly, for some of us, the world outside our front door became inhospitable, even for a short time or only in specific settings. But that sense of loss of faith in the safety of the world outside was real. Secondly, our Hospitable Kingdom sculpture portrays an environment that is open, accepting and with the capacity to meet the needs of all who find a home in it. A safe place.

Julie Ward
Kalamunda February 2021

How is this going work?

Ash Wednesday - 17 February signals the start of Lent.

Saturday 20 February – 3.00 pm- 5.00 pm – Lent for Women reflecting on the sculpture.

Personal or group study - Each session has a reflection, a prayer, a bible quote, and a response for you to complete. Sometimes the response is designed to be shared; other times, it is personal.

Lent 1 – Reflection on the Hospitable Kingdom sculpture.

Lent 2 – Reflection on the theology of the Hospitable Kingdom. *Written by the Reverend John Ward*

Lent 3 – Reflection on the church of the Hospitable Kingdom.

Lent 4 – Reflection on the Hospitable Kingdom outside of the building.

Lent 5 – Reflections from parishioners.

Palm Sunday – Reflection on being the Hospitable Kingdom.

NOTE ON LENT 5 Lent 5 is not complete. I need you to contribute to that session. I am looking for personal responses to the sculpture, the readings, the prayers, or the concepts. These responses can be written as a reflection, a prayer, a poem or a song. You may also consider a drawing, sculpture, photo, collage or painting. With your contributions, I will put together a selection of your offerings.

When? Please start emailing or handing in after Lent 3. The final date will be Thursday before Lent 5.

Lent 1 Reflection on the Hospitable Kingdom sculpture

"Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers." Romans 12:13
NRSV

Australians have some notoriety for living in an extremely challenging country. We have dangerous and deadly snakes, sharks and spiders. Walk five minutes in the bush, and you will be lost for five hours. Travel to the outback will leave your bones bleached in the desert. And the summers will kill you through fires, floods and heatwaves; take your pick as to which one. This notoriety suggests that Australia is an inhospitable place, incompatible with life. Yet, for thousands of years, the original inhabitants of the land developed a strong understanding and connection to the country to the extent that no area was unliveable or had nothing to offer.

I have put this description out there to look at "hospitable" differently from how we might usually view the word. So, what does hospitable mean and where does it come from? What other words relate to it, and how can we apply that to the Hospitable Kingdom sculpture?

Definition of hospitable

1a: given to generous and cordial reception of guests, e.g. a kind, *hospitable* people they are *hospitable* ... : give a guest everything, and leave him free to do as he likes— Bram Stoker

b: promising or suggesting generous and friendly welcome, e.g. *hospitable* faces

c: offering a pleasant or sustaining environment grows in even the least *hospitable* climates

2: readily receptive : OPEN, e.g. *hospitable* to new ideas

History and Etymology for hospitable

borrowed from Medieval Latin *hospitābilis*, from *hospitāre* "to lodge, reside, give lodging to, house" (going back to Latin *hospitārī* "to put up as a guest, give lodging to," derivative of *hospit-*, *hospes* "guest, host") + Latin *-bilis* "capable (of acting) or worthy (of being acted upon)" — more at [HOST ENTRY 3](#), [-ABLE](#)

"Hospitable." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hospitable>. Accessed 14 February 2021.

Hospitable, hospitality, hospital, host all come from the same medieval Latin terms. The history of organised Christianity is littered with these same words. Is this about living out God's Kingdom on earth or acting out the Gospel? The next session looks at some of the biblical and theological understandings of the Hospitable Kingdom that influenced the sculpture.

Let us pray

We welcome You, Spirit of God,
You who seek our company
and choose to make Yourself known to us.

We are grateful for Your blessings,
including bringing us together
at this time,
in this place.

We ask that You use this time
to challenge us, to encourage us,
to change us,
that we may continue to grow and be transformed
and in this process
find hope to offer the world around us.

In our conversations and our sharing,
in our eating, resting,
learning and laughing,
may we notice You,
find You,
and offer You.

Adapted from Ngatiawa River Monastery.²

Your turn – Response

If you get the chance, go and have a good look at the Hospitable Kingdom sculpture. Look at the leaves, their different colours and textures. Find the birds. Count them. Look at the differences between them. Do they look like any birds you have ever seen? Can you find any other animals within the branches? Look at the branches? How are they made, and why are they that shape? What is used to make the trunk? What is feeding the tree from below? See if you can look at the sculpture from above, below, and different side views.

If you are unable to come and look at the sculpture, Appendix 1 has photos.

² The Northumbria Community Trust.

In the space below, write some words to describe what you see in the sculpture.

What I see ...

Now have a go at using one or two words to explain the meaning of Hospitable Kingdom. What does it mean to you?

Hospitable Kingdom

For next week - Read

To prepare for next week's session, read the following bible references in your favourite version.

Genesis 2.9

Revelations 22.2

Mark 4.30-32

Genesis 18.1-8

1 Corinthians 11.23-26

Psalm 1

Mark 14.22-25

Galatians 3.13-14

Lent 2 Reflection on the theology of the Hospitable Kingdom

"so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade" Mark 4.32.

Hospitable Kingdom Sculpture – Theology in 3D

The idea of a sculptural representation of the parable of the mustard seed is not unique. Still, the **Hospitable Kingdom Sculpture** takes an oblique approach. Its focus is the concluding words of Mark's version of the parable, *"so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade" Mark 4.32*. These words suggest the plant that grows from the tiniest of seeds is big enough to meet the needs of nesting birds. They can set up "house" there. The leaves provide a shelter secure enough for young to hatch and grow into mature adults.

The Kingdom parable speaks to a reality where God's will hold sway. The design focus of the Sculpture is shaped by the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. The branches' structure repeats the pattern one into three going up and three into one going down. The leaves repeat this pattern by being triples whose shape evokes the Trinity Knot or *triquetra* (*the Celtic symbol of the 3 life cycles of women appropriated by Irish Christianity as a symbol of the Holy Trinity*)

From the trunk at the base to the twigs at the top, a regular symmetry is maintained. To get the proportion right for each sequence of branches, we used the Fibonacci sequence, 1 - 1 - 2 - 3 - 5 - 8 (each number is the sum of the two previous number). The pinecone and the centre of the Sunflower are two examples of naturally occurring Fibonacci sequences. From a single trunk splitting three ways, this sequence gives a clear progression to the 243rd leaf on top. The goal was a stylised natural look that was like no existing tree or bush – it's a parable after all!

The Sculpture construction created a mini-community committed to making leaves, source scarves and ties, cut, bend and shape wire and aluminium tubing. The Op Shop volunteers diverted scarves, ties and ribbons, and parishioners made over 300 leaves. A small band from both Op Shop and Parish workshopped the construction of the birds.

The brief to all stipulated a kaleidoscope of colour with a flock of generic birds that are not species-specific. It was to embody variety, vitality and vibrancy – a kind of three-dimensional stained-glass window that rewards a second and third look.

The Sculpture grows out of a circular mat that represents God's unity that holds all in all. It uses a simple three-plait of scarves and pashminas (a further nod to the triune God). Originally the mat was to be a welcome door-mat, but that proved far too small. Still, the concept of welcome is indispensable to being hospitable.

The benefit of plaiting is exploited in the upper branches, using four strands; a challenging new skill to master. The plaiting of the 4 colours together can evoke how God weaves us all into the working and sustaining of this "hospitable" kingdom.

At the centre of the three primary branches are the birdbath and seed tray. They are composed of a bowl, a cup and a plate – the necessary utensils of sustenance. In this present combination, the Chalice and pattern remind us that which bears the elements of the Eucharist. The words, 'Do this in remembrance of me' come to mind. A further allusion to the Cross is found when the completed Sculpture is viewed with two of the secondary branches coming out to either side of the viewer and the third in the centre going away. The trunk and the three secondary branches form a cross shape with the horizontal bar arching upwards. This can merge our traditional concept of the Cross with the reference in Galatians of the scripture "Cursed is anyone who hangs on a tree" (Galatians 3.13-14). This aspect of the sculpture represents the transforming paradox of the Cross, which transfigures it into the Tree of Life.

Let us pray

Master,
Incomparable woodturner,
you take tough jarrah
 like me,
 and from it
fashion things more beautiful
 than the eye has seen.

Some days
you uncover in me
 a grain-pattern
 fine and elegant
which I never knew
 I possessed.

Sometimes
you work patiently
 through sapholes
 knots, or rogue grain
spinning contours of grace
 in spite of all.

Carpenter,
irrepressible craftsman,
you even became jarrah
 in the lathe
 in order to share
 the pain of the mis-shapen,
and the love song

of the jarrah's Creator.

Bruce D. Prewer³

Your turn

1. What images or experiences does the sculpture evoke for you?

For me –

2. What other scripture references or symbols does the Hospitable Kingdom sculpture bring to mind?

For me –

For next week

For some parts of Australia and the world, gathering in church has been one way the coronavirus has spread and led to clusters. We have been very fortunate here, but the way we do church has been impacted.

Make a list of the changes. Think of physical layout, interaction with each other, the rituals of worship, and any other changes you noticed.

My list.

³ Bruce D. Prewer and Aub Podlich, *Australian Accents* (Adelaide, South Australia: Lutheran Publishing House, 1988).

Lent 3 Reflection on the church of the Hospitable Kingdom

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Hebrews 13:2 NRSV

When it came to Ash Wednesday, did you go hunting for your palm cross? Were you running through your head where you might have put it? When did you remember that we did not gather in the Rose Garden for Palm Sunday last year? Some of you might have made palm crosses at home, but many of you will not have one from 2020—almost a metaphor for the year. We did not do that, so that memory is missing! Birthdays celebrated on Zoom, funerals attended by four people, weddings postponed, or out of reach for us to travel to, holiday bookings cancelled, and so on. For some of us, the world became inhospitable and threatening. For others, our lives continued almost unchanged. The COVID-19 pandemic experience is different for everyone, and everyone has a story. Everyone has a story of the disruption to our everyday lives and to the markers of critical transition times in our lives. Education, weddings, funerals, holidays, recreation, birthdays, family gatherings, important faith celebrations were all changed in some form. Some of our stories are sad, some are happy, and some just funny. Our experiences of wearing face masks, signing into places, remembering to use the hand sanitiser and avoiding standing too close to other people has led to much hilarity.

Parish churches were affected by lockdowns, record-keeping, managing people's movement within the buildings, etc. Distribution of communion wine, sharing the peace and passing the offertory bowl around are rituals we have not yet regained. The fundamental interactions between the church and the community were limited and changed. Baptisms, weddings, funerals and pastoral care to the needy were no longer done according to personal preferences, but in line with health department guidelines.

Reflecting on how the local parish church deals with these strange times leads me to think about how we share the local community's experiences. How do we delve into their stories and experiences? Think about how we develop friendships and what we do when we meet new people. Often this involves sharing stories, finding points in common, sharing resources, helping with decision-making, and being prepared to invest in what it takes to grow a relationship. It is the same in building a community relationship.

Let us pray

Lord God, you have taught us
that we are members one of another
And that none of us lives to himself alone:
we thank you for the community of which we are part;
for those who share with us in its activities,
and for all who serve its varied interests.
Help us, as we have opportunity,
to make our own contribution to the community
and to learn to be good neighbours,
that by love we may serve one another,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Frank Colquhoun⁴

Your turn *These ideas are adapted from a long-forgotten source.*

Often in our worship, others lead us in prayer. We are asked to join their prayers for the needs of the Church and the world and all who are in need. All Christians are called to share in the ministry of Christ's intercession for the whole world.

I want you to think about the ways you have heard prayers being led.

- The prayer saying, "God our Father..."
- An invitation to pray. "We pray for..."
- A response, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer

Today, your task is to write one, two or three intercessory prayers, but each can only have one sentence. Plus, I want you to start with a metaphor for God.

"Oh mighty ruler of the world, bang the heads together of those global leaders seemingly intent on leading us to war."

Some ideas of metaphors...

Come up with your own or look at the list found in Appendix 2 and use that as is or to spark something new in you.

Write your intercessions –

⁴ Frank Colquhoun, ed., *Contemporary Parish Prayers* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975).

For next week

You may have noticed that Lent 5 is empty. Now is the time for you to start working on your contribution. I am looking for personal responses to the sculpture, the readings, the prayers, or the concepts. These responses can be written as a reflection, a prayer, a poem or a song. You may also consider a drawing, sculpture, photo, collage or painting. With your contributions, I will put together a selection of your offerings.

When? Please start emailing or handing in after Lent 3. The final date will be Thursday before Lent 5.

Jot down some ideas now, before you forget.

My ideas

Lent 4 Reflection on the Hospitable Kingdom outside of the building

"The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field." Matthew 13:44

You may have seen news footage of cathedrals in England being used as mass vaccination centres. The large, flat, airy space of the nave is perfect for the occasion. One cathedral also worked on creating a soothing ambience with live organ music. What a fabulous example of the Hospitable Kingdom!

Churches are known to offer sanctuary, or safety, in the face of a threat. Protection from an enemy or from invasion. A quiet, reflective place in times of personal distress. Security from the elements of nature. Shelter in times of persecution.

Churches are also used as performance venues. Some modern buildings are multi-purpose with stackable chairs, so the space is for worship on Sundays and recreation space for the remainder of the week.

These hospitable actions are also all examples of community resilience-building activities through interactions, connections, and a shared vision. Churches are particularly situated with physical resources and opportunities to strengthen the local economy.

Think about St Barnabas. The church precinct's location and size create public open space used as a thoroughfare, a shortcut, a place to rest, and a rose garden of great beauty when in bloom.

We learnt the importance of the memorial rose garden in 2018 when the idea of a poppy installation became a reality. In-person and online, many people's comments spoke of an attachment to the garden, beyond what we, as a parish, imagined.

Most parishes have an ambivalent attitude toward fundraising activities. However, these activities can be reimagined to allow local people to spend money in their local community. The catch cry of the pandemic era – "Buy local!! Hopefully, this year we can again have a large fete with singers and dancers providing entertainment, sausage sizzle and morning tea available, and any number of little stalls providing an array of goods.

If you have not sat and watched the streams of people who visit our Op Shop, try it one morning. Items are being dropped off, regulars are sorting through clothes or books looking for the new ones, and others are checking out the shop for the first time. Of course, there is a range of motivations for people dropping off items. Still, they are looking to support a local business.

What else can we do to increase interaction between the community we live in and us?

Let us pray

Risen Lord,
so often encountered,
so seldom recognised,
you meet us in the garden of our hearts,
on the lonely roads of our lives,
our empty beaches, and greet us.
But in our blindness,
we mistake you for someone else.
through our tears, we see a gardener;
in our weariness and wariness, a stranger.
But you call us back to ourselves.
Forgive us our hard-heartedness,
our lack of understanding.
Open our eyes and our ears to you,
wherever you are found,
and give us grace to love you with abandon,
to throw ourselves into your service,
as Mary threw herself at your feet,
as Peter threw himself into the sea.

Ms Jennifer Heckart⁵

Your turn

You have read and reflected, written prayers, looked for readings and made lists. Now, describe an interaction the parish has had or continues to have, with the local community. For example, in the early years of the current building, the fete had the local fire brigade visit. Last year we raised money donated to both the regular fire brigade and the bush fire brigade. Both are volunteer groups. What story can you tell?

Use the space in the box on the next page.

⁵ Elizabeth Geitz, Marjorie Burke, and Ann Smith, eds., *Women's Uncommon Prayers: Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2000).

My story

For next week

The session for Lent 5 needs help from you. I am looking for personal responses to the sculpture, the readings, the prayers, or the concepts. These responses can be written as a reflection, a prayer, a poem or a song. You may also consider a drawing, sculpture, photo, collage or painting. With your contributions, I will put together a selection of your offerings.

When? Please start emailing or handing in this week. The final date will be Thursday 18 March.

Lent 5 Reflections on the Hospitable Kingdom

Palm Sunday Reflection on being the Hospitable Kingdom

"Be hospitable to one another without complaining." 1 Peter 4:9

When the first lockdown occurred last year, I still went to work every day, coming home pretty much to eat and sleep. I was not so impacted by the local economy's slowing down. However, we made a decision to support some particular local businesses, and this has continued. Mason and Bird coffee shop is a two-minute walk for us – across the road, past the Library and around the corner and we're there. One or both of us have gone almost every day since late March 2020 to buy coffee. One extra-large cappuccino and one extra-large latte. Not a very fancy order – no soy, chia, turmeric or even sugar. We have seen the bare coffee shop with a significantly reduced staff of three, often stressed and unhappy looking. We have seen the team's younger members' return, tables back out, and the buzz of customers dining in. They have learnt our order, our names and seem to appreciate our steady, mundane order. We have learnt their names, which barista makes the best coffee and how they look when the stress is removed, and the smiles are back.

With the second, sharp lockdown, I was at home to make the daily coffee run on whatever day I chose. Again, the staff was reduced, but there was more confidence that this lockdown would be short. How do I know this? This time, the staff included an extra person or two, and some of the younger ones were given shifts. The owner was still stressed and a bit grumpy, but the smile was back by the end of the week.

We continue the walk to buy our coffee, and that action has taken on an element of ritual. It is the same, the order does not change. However, on rare occasions, we have added a breakfast burger or a slice of cake. It involves a little bit of preparation. After collecting many takeaway cups and lids we purchased keep cups, so we preheat those. There is no discussion about whether we will get coffee or what type or from where we know. The staff just check whether it is "the usual?"

Who is being hospitable? We thought that maybe our little, boring daily coffee order might help the coffee shop, not because of the money, but because it was predictable and regular. During both lockdowns, there were always other people there buying daily coffee. The bike riders and day-trippers, who make up a substantial part of their trade were missing, but local people went every day and bought a coffee. The staff continued serving their customers to the best they could, even when a little grumpy and stressed. The fact that we know they got stressed was their gift to us, letting us into their lives a little.

Being at home now, I have absorbed the ritual and enjoy the slowness of it. I appreciate the effort it took for these businesses to stay open and see mutual benefit

exchange in our little order and the "hello, how are you?" and "see you tomorrow" that accompanies it.

Let us pray

O God of love, make us more thankful
for all the boundless mercies of our daily life.
Forgive us that we are so often ungrateful,
complaining and discontented,
taking for granted your greatest gifts:
the blessings of health,
the comforts of home and family life,
the joys of friendship,
and the beauty of the world around us.
Teach us day by day to number our blessings
and to receive each of them as from our Father's hand;
and fill our lives with gratitude,
our lips with praise;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Frank Colquhoun.*⁶

Your turn

Below you will find a template of an Easter egg. Print it out, colour in and on the back write something about what have you discovered in your local area since early 2020. Has there been a change in how you deal with local businesses or facilities or groups? Bring to church and hang on the hospitable kingdom sculpture.

⁶ Colquhoun, *Contemporary Parish Prayers*.

