

# TRANSCEND: DECEMBER

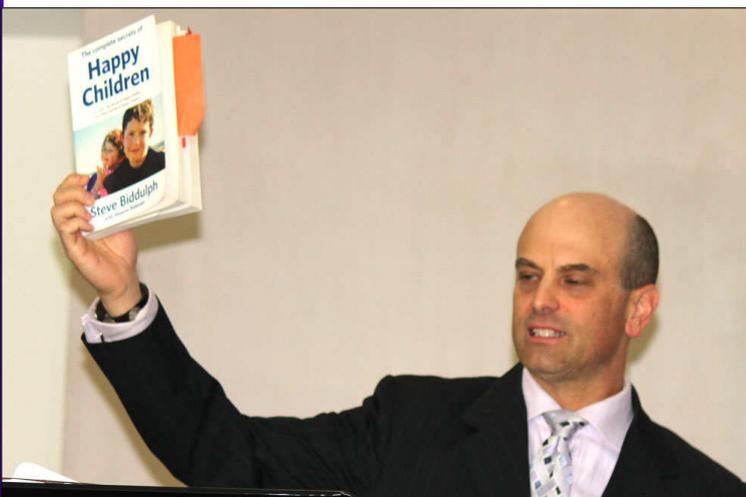
Ascot Vale Uniting Church Newsletter 2014

60 Maribyrnong Road, Moonee Ponds

Services: Sundays 10 am



## Happy Children: helping children to find the inner peace and vitality that make up emotional health



To claim your sense of self in the presence of another or in circumstances where the surrounding environment is hostile to you—that's the significance of Christmas and the person of Mary. She had the courage to be who God asked her to be, a compassionate and assertive person. She gave birth to Jesus in straw and starlight.

### Mary's dream and the creative spark or Spirit

Mary was a woman of great faith who fought for what was right: that's what her famous song of praise, 'the Magnificat' in Luke's first chapter tells us. In it she speaks of the promised time

when **'the powerful will be brought down from their thrones and the lowly shall be lifted up; the hungry shall be filled with good things and the rich sent away empty'**. She and her husband Joseph provided her son with a good foundation of love and care despite living in terrible poverty. Historians tell us that Jesus' people, first century Jews from Nazareth were on the whole very poor. Poverty and its heavy blows upon a family: that's what Mary giving birth to her son in a stable represents.

We can surmise that through the years Mary's relationship to her son and her ability to cope helped Jesus to become the man that he was, to enjoy good emotional health. **Our Christmas and Easter faith is shaped by Jesus and what he stood for. Jesus' own faith was shaped largely by his mother.**

**The Holy Spirit was working at Jesus birth through Mary's hopes for her son and her dream for a better world.** She was responsive to it's creative and sustaining presence, saying "let it be with me according to your word". And Mary had the faith and steadfastness to announce in her 'Magnificat' that her son Jesus and others who held similar views would bring in a more just world. What faith! **Think how much your Christian faith with its devotion to social justice and creating peace is shaped by Mary.**

**At Christmas time traditional evangelical preachers may overlook this in their zeal to emphasize the supernatural and the marvellous-** the so called 'miraculous conception' within Mary. According to this literal view it was the Holy Spirit working in her womb that gave Mary the power to conceive – without the need of male involvement- and later she gave birth to Jesus. This is called the 'virgin birth'.

P.T.O.

*May the peace and blessings  
of Christmas be yours;  
And may the coming year  
be filled with happiness.*



But does the Holy Spirit work like that? The Spirit has always operated effectively through the messiness and intimacy of relationships, our relationships to others and through our relationship to the divine. It's that creative presence and energy animating all of life.

### **The symbolic significance of the 'virgin birth'**

**With great respect to those who believe otherwise**, the minority view within Christianity is that the virgin birth of Jesus is a Christmas symbol. To claim the miraculous conception as historic fact goes beyond what scientific reason allows. In other words it contradicts how God works in the world. "Jesus was conceived of the holy spirit" is a theological not a biological statement. Theologically it meant that in Jesus the divine purposes of justice and right relations on earth were inaugurated; the new world of peace had come, a greater spiritual presence was now available to all after his birth.

**Old Testament stories of God's control of the womb**, bringing life out of barrenness, were influential in the development of the belief that Jesus was miraculously conceived. Sarah's miraculous conception of Isaac was one of several examples.

Mixed together with that was the prevalence of Greek mythology in the first century, some of its symbolic forms having found their way into the writings of the New Testament. A key idea of Greek mythology was that a God would team up with a human agent, a woman, to give birth to a great leader.

Such legendary tales of human and divine agency existed for example about Alexander the Great.

### **Paul in praise of the creative Spirit**

**So Spirit is an aliveness and synergy within and between people who build an affectionate and generous bond with each other.** As they learn deep values from their sacred stories and scriptures they find their way forward. Spirit evokes a deeper awareness which is available to all people, not just to Christians; it soothes, challenges and guides all if they listen.

The varying quality of our relationships and the degree of an individual's openness of mind and maturity accounts for the Holy Spirit's unpredictability and mystery. That's because Spirit must work through us and our limitations and at times self-serving attitudes. It is necessarily limited because of human limitations- but only for a season. It finds new ways to break through.

For example Paul wrote that walking according to the 'desires of the flesh' rather than by the Spirit can limit the healing work of the Holy Spirit. For Paul being obsessed with desires of the flesh meant being attached to false pride and pretensions, rampant narcissism or untamed envy. Paul described the divine-human interaction so well and pointed to its limitations and possibilities. In describing himself he wrote that even though a "broken vessel" God's Spirit flowed and worked through him. And if one wanted to live by the spirit then one must sow to the spirit. **In other words don't feed your protected and anxious self but your assertive and courageous self.**

**The need to be emotionally attached to another is an example of feeding our protected self.**

In becoming emotionally attached we are not allowed to have our own mind or to feel emotions like sadness, anger or joy. In being emotionally fused we forfeit our God given freedom and identity.

Last Sunday we looked at ways of achieving our God given identity by addressing the theme: **'Curing by listening, how to help youngsters deal with an unkind world'**. The goals that we discussed were **active listening** to others and **differentiation**. They help a person to transcend their anxious self.

### **Differentiation: creating space for the creative Spirit to work**

**Differentiation is neither attachment nor emotional fusion.** It means sustaining who you are with a separate identity and thought process while maintaining a close emotional bond to your partner.

It's being assertive.

**In terms of your participation in group life** it means to act on your deeply held values and beliefs; to protest and to fight using the peaceful weapons of the spirit: truth, faith, prayer, the word of God, and righteousness. **Biblically defined righteousness is the ardent desire for what's right in our relationships and in our group life.** All of this adds up to a non-violent and non-aggressive lifestyle committed to preparing the way for a new and kinder world. Mary the mother of Jesus certainly had that kind of faith.

**So always remember:**

**How you feel and express your emotions is shaped by family and culture to an enormous degree. But from deep within yourself you have the power to choose how you will be in your relationships. To claim your self in the presence of another is to feel and express your emotions in a healthy way, in an assertive not an aggressive or coercive way.**

**Ask yourself:**

**Does your personality and love allow the other- your child or partner- to explore their own world, to learn healthy ways of expressing their feelings like anger, sadness and fear? Can they become a mature person by claiming their sense of self in your presence?**

The goal of your faith journey and spiritual development is to grow into your full maturity and stature. **God calls us to be compassionate and assertive.** To use theologian Paul Tillich's splendid phrase, it's about having '**the courage to be**', to claim your sense of self even when life is against you. **When you do this God's full presence will be realized in the world and Mary's dream that first Christmas for a better world is fulfilled.**

**At that first Christmas and throughout history God acts in the world discreetly but with absolute effectiveness.** This can happen in the life of a family or in a person's soul. It happened in a stable in Bethlehem despite the worst circumstances.

Our church wishes you a wonderful Christmas and new year,

Rev. Ron W. Rosinsky

## **SERVICES: Sundays 10am**

**Worship Themes: Our series on raising happy children and improving ourselves through a robust spirituality continues in December.**

7 December: Communion Sunday: '*Seeds in the mind; how we hypnotise our children (and adults) every single day*'; Luke 1: 46- 55 Mary's call to rise up

14 December: **Kid's Uniting end of year Christmas party**  
Theme: "The assertive parent; the assertive person. Do it –now."

21 December:  
Theme: "What children and adults really want. It's cheaper than video games and healthier than ice cream" Luke 1: 67-80 'Becoming strong in spirit'

25 December: **9:30am Service**  
Theme: "Coming back from your breaking point" Luke 2: 1-14- Mary's faith  
**Christmas Lunch at the Manse after church, please bring a plate if you can.**

28 December: A service of readings and Christmas carols  
Matthew 2: 13-23- The escape to Egypt

4 January: Communion Sunday  
Theme: "Your home as sanctuary in an unkind world"  
Matthew 2: 1-12 - King Herod against the Wise Men

11 January: Theme: "Your maturity as sanctuary for your family"  
Mark 1: 4-11 The baptism of Jesus

1 February: **Kid's Uniting (Sunday School) recommences**

## Coming Events

Sunday December 14th.	Kid's Uniting Christmas Party
Thursday December 25th.	Christmas Service—Note 9.30 start. Lunch at manse
Thursday January 1st.	New Years Day
Wednesday January 7th.	Orthodox Christmas Day
Monday January 26th.	Australia Day
Sunday February 1st.	Kid's Uniting recommences
Saturday February 14th.	Valentine's day
Tuesday February 17th	Shrove Tuesday
Wednesday February 18th	Ash Wednesday
Monday May 9th	Labour Day



Thanks to the generosity of the Australian community, UnitingCare and Target have collected over 1.7 million gifts in the last 23 years, with 30,260 gifts and \$78,665 worth of gift cards donated at Target stores across the country last year. There were also an additional 31,228 gifts donated by very generous community groups, bringing the gift total to 61,488 gifts.



- Simply place an unwrapped gift inside the large Giving Box located in any Target store.
- You can donate a Target Gift Card.
- You can donate online. [www.givingbox.com.au](http://www.givingbox.com.au)

## THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

At this time of year, we can experience the true Spirit of love, the joy of giving, and how a whole society can change for the better when the Spirit moves everyone.

Our Christmas traditions are always changing and developing new ways of expression but nothing changes our feelings. We might feel sad at the commercialism of Christmas but at the same time, the continued existence of the Christian message offers people hope for the future and a refuge when they are in trouble.



People often say that life would be so good if it was Christmas all the time. In actual fact, for Christians, the Christmas Spirit IS always with us. When we look around us, and count our blessings, may we all be filled with a lasting gratitude makes life worthwhile.



**So, like St Nicholas, filled with love, joy, and peace,  
we can go out and serve the Lord.**

## Celebrating Isabella's Birthday



A wonderful night with family and friends.



The four stages of a man's life - You believe in Santa Claus - You don't believe in Santa Claus - You become Santa Claus - You look like Santa Claus.





*The church garden is looking magnificent. Take some time to explore the garden and see the progress of the fruit trees, and the various shrubs in flower. The peach trees are loaded with fruit.*

*We much appreciate the work of Patricia who is our garden coordinator. She has put many hours into the garden, planting, watering and weeding.*

*With the hot dry weather starting we can all help by giving some time to water or pull out a few weeds.*

*Even the smallest contribution of time would be helpful.*

*If you can help, please have a talk to Patricia. You will often find her working in the garden before church.*

## 2015 - in numerology - is a magical number.

So, prepare yourselves for a truly wonderful year; a year filled with the Lord's Grace and .....with numerous other surprises.

February 22 is one of these days. It's Pancake Day!

And we, the Elders, have a great surprise waiting for you. More information in the February Transcend!

On behalf of the Elders, Dina

One year Father Christmas is forced to have an official from the Aviation Authority check his sleigh to make sure it's airworthy. The official checks out the sleigh on the ground then sits beside Father Christmas for a test flight. Suddenly Father Christmas notices the official has a revolver in his pocket. 'What's that for?' he asks. 'You're not a hijacker are you?' 'No,' replies the official. 'But we have to see how you handle this craft when you lose an engine on take-off.'

John and his wife Mary go away to Russia for Christmas and meet up with a local lad named Rudolf.

One day they are sitting outside a cafe and John says "how lovely, it's starting to snow" Rudolf corrects him and says "no John that's rain".

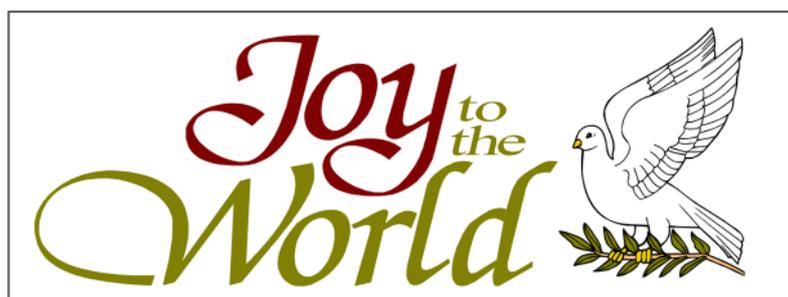
John insists it's starting to snow and Rudolf insists it's rain.

Mary turns to John and backs Rudolf up by saying.....

"Rudolf the red knows rain dear"

## CHURCH ROSTERS

<b>AVUC ROSTER 2014 – 2015</b>	<b>SERVICE/ LEADER</b>	<b>COMMUN- ION ELDER</b>	<b>DUTY ELDER</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>WELCOM- ER</b>	<b>READER</b>	<b>MORNING TEA</b>
7 Dec	Communion Rev Ron	Melita	Melita	Rob	Dina	Candace	Dina/Jutta
14 Dec Christmas Party - KU	Rev Ron			Maria	Ken/Jenny	Chris	Ken/Jenny
21 Dec	Rev Ron		Angelika	Candace	Andrea	Barbara	Bente/ Barbara
25 Dec Christ- mas Day	Rev Ron			Dorothy	Melita/ Michael	Michael	
28 Dec	Rev Ron			Dorothy	Dina	Angelika	
4 Jan 2015	Communion Rev Ron	Noel	Noel	Rob	Ken/Jenny	Ken	-----
11 Jan	Rev Ron			Maria	Chris	Chris	-----
18 Jan	Rev Ron		Dorothy	Dorothy	Cally	Cally	-----
25 Jan Australia Day	Rev Ron			Candace	Dina	Bente	-----
1 Feb Recover- ing Service	Communion Rev Ron KU recommence	Peter	Peter	Rob	Michael/ Melita	Melita	Ken/Jenny
8 Feb Evolution Sunday	Rev Ron			Maria	Andrea	Marycon	Marycon/ Angelika
15 Feb	Rev Ron		Michael	Dorothy	Dina	Candace	Dina/Jutta



'Transcend' is published monthly  
Articles and photos are welcome.

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Michael Long	

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