

## Where are the prophets?

St Philip's Anglican Church, O'Connor  
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Advent 3B, 11 December 2011

*Isaiah 61.1-4,8-11, Psalm 126, 1 Thessalonians 5.12-28, John 1.6-8, 19-28*

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Last night, at 12.36am, the moon was full. And the earth was plunged into darkness.

A shadow came over the face of the full moon as the earth got in the way of the sun's light, reflected off the moon. (Yes, I saw some of the eclipse until the cloud band eclipsed the eclipse. But I had seen total lunar eclipses before...)

It's a strange, brooding shadow, with more than a hint of terror and mystery. The shadow eclipses the brightness and plunges the earth back into a strange untimely night.

Advent has hints of this strange darkness.

It is a time of preparation. Like Lent, it is a time when the liturgical colour is violet. We light candles, lots of them, to keep away the darkness.

Unlike Lent, which finishes with three days; passion and tragedy, grief and waiting, and resurrection joy,

unlike Lent, Advent finishes with twelve wondrous days of Christmas... of which we celebrate just one!

Where is the "brooding darkness" of Advent when it finishes with the joy of a special birth?

Many of us know the darkness and grief of Christmas when grief and loss becomes more acute; when poverty means inability to share in the consumer madness of the time.

But there is more.

In his poem "The Magi", TS Eliot quotes Lancelot Andrewes—Rebecca mentioned him last week as the Anglican divine who spent five hours in prayer before midday.

"A hard coming we had of it." These words of the Magi are a quote of Andrewes, but then they ask: Did we come all that way for a birth, or for a death?

Christmas has within it the promise of the dreadful culmination of Good Friday, and yet, the promise of resurrection and new life.

Christmas has within it a shadow.

The news this week has a shadow. Two big stories: The Euro and the Euro zone, and interest rates

... but a shadow,  
there was a conference in Durban.

Where are the prophets?

In the letter to the Thessalonians, Paul writes "Do not despise the words of the prophets (or the prophecies), but test everything." (5:20)

Where are the prophets?

Here in the parish we can maybe see two groups which are prophets: those who work at Pandora's and Robin and her helpers at Northbourne Community, and those who work at Pandora's.

Prophecy can be action as well as words.

Recently, we have seen twelve months of generation of electricity from our photovoltaic panels. Those statistics are in today's pew sheet. I am sure that those who contributed to the system were not thinking very much about the ability to make money. It was to be pioneers with local generation of electricity and to help the industry grow.

Many of us in this parish are among the one million Australians who have PVs on their roof.

But where is the passion for stories such as those which have come out of Durban? where is the passion for this in the media, in the church?

There is no passion in the media for stories like the Durban conference. There is passion here, in this place.

Passion for Justice, for Peace

There is great passion here for the curing of the earth.

Can we turn that passion into prophecy?

Do we dare to dream of changing the world — changing the church...?

Or do we “covet peace, the curing of the earth but not the pain, that carries you to birth”?  
(Shirley Murray; words are in the pew sheet)

Prophets tell us what/who God is  
they tell us the work God does in the world  
(OT prophets saw the work of god in history).

John was not “the prophet” [like Moses]  
(expectations were of Moses, Elijah and the Messiah)

BUT he was certainly a prophet who proclaimed.

Prophets also challenge us to be what god wants us to be.

In the words of the prophet Shirley Murray:

you long for us to be  
a birthing place for peace,  
a justice tree,

We stand in a line of powerful women:

**Margaret Hobson** who started teaching children in the hall (look at the kindergarten now!)  
(Margaret was the wife of our second rector, Doug Hobson)

**Sandra Lamerton** who dreamed of starting an op shop... look at Pandora's now!

And **Robin Moore** who stuck in there in her ministry at Northbourne Community.

Can we harness the passion in this place  
to be a prophetic voice  
to challenge our church  
to challenge our society?

Where is *your* passion? Where is *your* enthusiasm? [*en theou... god within*]

Where is God within you?

What is strong to give birth here? (Here, in this place, at St Philip's.)

I want the PV panels on that roof to do so much more than helping us to pay an electricity bill!

You wait for us,  
you long for us to be  
an energy for life,  
a flag! a sign!  
a fragrance in the air — fresh bread, new wine!

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Using the hymn “You wait for us” words by New Zealander Shirley Murray from *Alleluia Aoteoroa*. **Two of the verses:**

1 We wait for you.

we long for you to come  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
bring Christmas to our home!

We covet peace,  
the curing of the earth,  
but not the pain  
that carries you to birth.

...

5 You wait for us,  
you long for us to be  
a birthing place for peace,  
a justice tree,  
an energy for life,  
a flag! a sign!  
a fragrance in the air — fresh bread, new wine!

*Parish statistics for the photovoltaic panels: (in the pew sheet)*

Kwh generated for last 12 months = 5680Kwh = average 13.92Kwh per day
Kwh used for last 12 months = 18547Kwh = average 50.67Kwh per day
365 days feed in tariff at .457c per Kwh = \$2595.76
Total charges for year = \$2910.25

*and at the 10am service:*

Hymns: **270**, We wait for you (insert), **216** (tune 371), **210**

During Communion: “Rejoice Greatly”, *Messiah, G.F. Handel sung by Tanuja*