

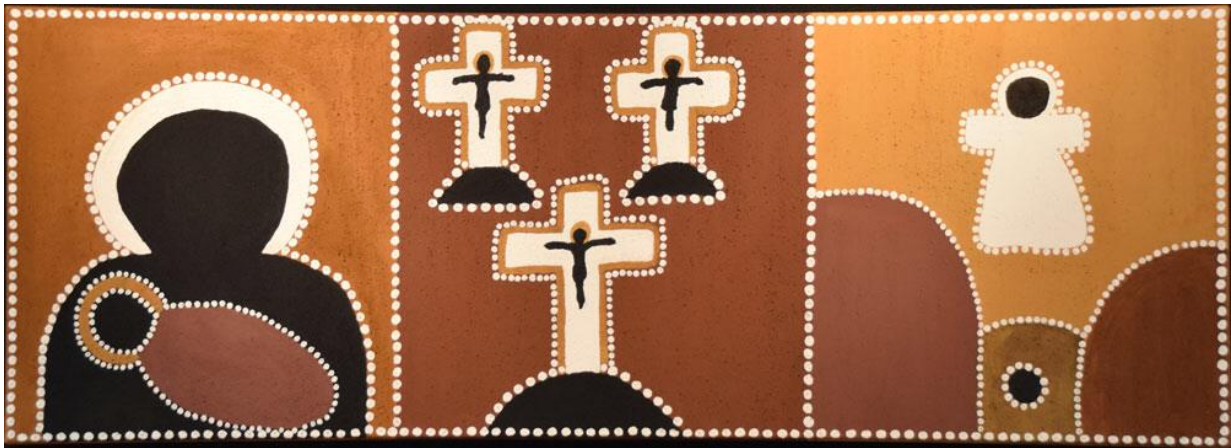
Notes from the office of the Bishop of Ripon Christmas 2020

Growing God's Kingdom in the Ripon Episcopal Area

**Bishop's notes will be back in the new year!
HAPPY CHRISTMAS!**

Please feel free to print and display these Notes on your notice-board. Remember to check out the Diocese of Leeds' website for news, events and resources at www.leeds.anglican.org. The Diocesan Twitter feed may be found at @LeedsCofE.

Please remember the Diocesan Prayer Cycle which may be found at <http://www.leeds.anglican.org/content/prayer-diary> it includes the Anglican Communion Cycle of Prayer, as well as praying for the people, parishes and places of the Diocese of Leeds.



Triptych by Benita Everett, Warmun, Western Australia
(on display in The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Canberra).

“When the three kings arrived in Bethlehem they spoke to the crowds and spread the good news”
(*Divine Chocolate* Advent Calendar, December 2020).

It's been something of a tradition in our home in recent years for my parents to send us an Advent Calendar (something they kept up with even while we lived on the other side of the world!). This year the *Divine Chocolate* calendar has indeed been taking us around the world with a daily reveal of part of the Christmas story accompanied by 'Happy Christmas' in the language of whatever the country for that day happens to be. In these days of Increased global isolation, and fracture of our (dis)United Kingdom, these daily reminders of our global partners have been very welcome. On this particular day however, it was the bit of the Biblical story that emerged from behind the window that made me think: *when the three kings arrived in Bethlehem they spoke to the crowds and spread the good news*. I went back to Matthew's Gospel and reread the bit about the arrival of the wise men. Nothing about them speaking to crowds and spreading the good news there. Hmmm, I pondered.

It made me think about the hinterlands of the Biblical narratives that give life to our faith, and the story of Jesus' birth that we recall once again at Christmas, and I was reminded yet again of the Jewish Rabbinic tradition of 'black fire and white fire' (the 'black fire' being the words on the page, and the 'white fire' the spaces in-between where the stories are sung, the pictures are painted, and the interpretation takes place: and both have equal value). This idea then of the three kings (and remember we only think that because there are three gifts!) speaking to crowds and telling them what was happening is an example of this 'hinterland'. Hinterland is a German word that means 'the land behind' or 'the back of beyond'. It's not a word I use much, but it's a word that came to mind when I was pondering that Advent Calendar window, and it has stayed with me.

Opening that particular window coincided with my receiving a regular email newsletter from 'The Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture' which contained the image on the far left of the *Triptych* above (I've included the whole painting above this reflection). You will note that it contains the distinctive 'dot painting' technique seen commonly in Aboriginal art. There are a number of theories of when and how dot painting emerged amongst Australia's indigenous peoples, and what it means, but one understanding is that the land itself (particularly when viewed from above) is full of scattered 'dots' (people, stones, objects, flowers, trees, and so on). I remember seeing massive art works in the National Gallery of Australia (in Canberra) and being struck by the colours, the vibrancy and the iconography (which to my Western eye and mind, I could not fully comprehend). There's a hinterland to it, because dot painting was possibly originally intended to conceal sacred stories, the dots covering over the imagery underneath which would have originally been drawn in the impermanence of the sandy ground. What lies beneath? What lies beyond? What lies beneath the narrative of the Christmas story, and what lies beyond it? Can we imagine the hinterlands of the characters: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the innkeepers, the angelic hosts, the wise men/people? The reality of most nativity plays is that they include lots of hinterland: extra characters, sheep not standing in the right place, and so on...

We all have our own hinterlands too, as to our communities. This past year we have perhaps dwelt in those behind and beyond spaces as we have been challenged by the relentless of the COVID_19 pandemic. And it's not ending soon. Yet we have hope: in science and medicine, and in the vaccines that have been developed with such rapidity. There's an answer to prayer in that development alone.

So I leave you with Benita Everett's *Triptych* viewed in its three-fold fulness. In the beyond-ness of the birth lies the death and the resurrection, and because of that we have hope.

Happy Christmas!

+HAH

Thank you

For all you have done this past year (I add my voice to that of +Nick in his *Ad Clerum* communications).

A huge 'thank you' to Judith for navigating the challenges of lockdown and keeping the running of the Ripon office as smooth as possible!

Resources

For Epiphany: the tradition of chalking the door of the home as a blessing for the year ahead (with the idea of the traditional names of the wise men, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar representing the phrase 'Christus Mansionem Benedicat *May Christ Bless this Home*'); https://virteomdevcdn.blob.core.net/site-saintclare-net/uploaded_media/saintclare_net/Adult_Faith_Formation/2021_Epiphany_Blessing_Only__1603830310.pdf

(that is a long address, so if all else fails, just google 'Epiphany chalk blessing 2021'!)

'Hopeful Conversations'

The next 'Hopeful Conversation' (for licensed clergy and LLMs in the Ripon Episcopal Area) will be on **January 21st 2021** Details below. Judith will issue a Zoom invitation and guidelines.

January 21st, 10.30 – 11.30 am *Hopeful Future*, The Rev'd Andy Rowe, Chaplain at Wetherby HMYOI.

Living in Love and Faith

The LLF resources are now published, with a resource hub online: <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/living-love-and-faith-learning-hub>

Bishop Helen-Ann is leading our Diocesan engagement with the resources, and more information on this will be shared soon. Please do take a look at the resources in the meantime. We will be inviting

parishes/benefice/ministry contexts to engage with the LLF course in particular after Easter 2021.
Bishop Helen-Ann is also a member of the national 'next steps' group for LLF.

Contact Details:

Bishop of Ripon


The Right Reverend Dr Helen-Ann Hartley

 bishop.helenann@leeds.anglican.org

The Bishop's Office
Redwood
New Road
Sharow
Ripon HG4 5BS.

Bishop's PA

Mrs Judith Richardson

 01765 601094

 judith.richardson@leeds.anglican.org

The Bishop's Office
Redwood
New Road
Sharow
Ripon HG4 5BS.
