

Big Water

Revd Hazel Davies - 6 July 2025

As HOPE Ginninderra community takes on its new shape I realise that for some of you I may seem like a stranger.

Married to Owen, my great friend and helper. I have 4 children and eight grandchildren.

For the past eight years or so I have counted Saint Barnabas Charnwood and Saint Michael and All Angels Hall as my Spiritual Home. Ordained as a deacon and licensed to this parish I believe (if I can quote the ordinal) I am called by God to be an ambassador of Christ in the world to proclaim the good news of God's love; to seek out the disaffected and indifferent and pray and work for peace and justice in the world.

I have been on this journey for 10 years out of a Floristry teaching career spanning three decades and founded Making Peasce, a national movement of the people for the rightful and perpetual memorial of the now well documented Australian Frontier Wars.

In particular I work with continuing custodians to raise the remembrance signature of the Desert Pea blood flower, using the same soft diplomacy as the Flanders Poppy.

I am in active dialogue with the Australian War Memorial and key massacre sites in this land, those recognised and those forgotten. Together we are raising an educational resource that will go out to all schools in Australia. Recently we launched a national moment in song .

Helen refers to me as "our deacon in the world". Some might say I am a deacon on the loose! Many of my dear friends in Christ in this place simply refer to me as "theirs." This body of Christ is my base camp one and when I am out there on the front line I can detect its pulse.

In this space I find endless opportunities to speak of the Prince of peace Jesus who by his conciliatory death on the cross destroyed the barriers of hostility and created one humanity reconciling us to God and to each other. For through him we all have access to the Father by the one Spirit.

This calling has taken me to the desert regions of this land. Aboriginal people say the desert is a harsh mistress but a great teacher. It is a place where the fingerprints of our creator God are writ large in the landscapes of rugged grandeur and in the endless depth of the reddened sunsets and night skies.

You can feel very small and insignificant in the desert but you can also hear the heartbeat of the creator. I am at once overwhelmed by the almightiness of God and staggered that I can call him ABBA Father and hear his guiding voice through the WORD made flesh.

In many ways being in the desert is like living in the pages of Isaiah's Oratorio where sensing the presence of God one might want to enter into the rocks and hide in the dust. Isaiah 2:10. Because the wilderness can feel desperate, but into this profound place of emptiness, God speaks abundance. For just below the sandy reaches of the river beds, artesian waters are present that sustain every living creature.

Despair gets drenched with hope. There is always that promise of water, the promise of eternal life. The possibility of Shalom.

It is this coming Shalom that Isaiah speaks of in his final summary in chapter 66. He foreshadows the coming of something so transformative, so significant that it will cause a great and final reversal of all that is wrong, twisted and broken within us, between us and in all creation. There will be peace he says and it will be like a river . Living moving water.

The Arrernte word **KWATYE** meaning water is synonymous with life, with renewal and restoration and strongly connected to **Ngarte. (Yahweh)**

But let's not mistake rivers for passive gentle bodies of water. Even when they are still, they are active.

Rivers can move mountains. Born of inland seas, they carved their way through the ancient gaps of the central desert .

Rivers make a way where there is no way.

So it is with the peace of God.

It doesn't just calm the heart, it can change the landscape of our lives. It removes the debris of fear that controls us. It cuts through hatred, bitterness, anxiety and dissent. It carves out a place for faith and community to grow.

The peace that results is not weak. It is a victorious peace.

It will be as Isaiah prophesied forged in the fire of the cross, confirmed by the resurrection and sealed by the Spirit. The same Spirit who hovered over the waters at the beginning of time and that knit together the body of Christ on earth.

That word peace is bandied about a lot isn't it ? But it continues to elude us as we know...

It doesn't matter how big they build the Australian War Memorial; no matter how much money they throw at it; wars and rumors of wars will be with us till the end of the age. Our beloved defence personnel will still continue to pay the ultimate sacrifice for a peace that can't be bought by the world or politics.

In the bible the word peace points not only to the absence of conflict but the ushering in of something better in its place.

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for peace is Shalom. In the New Testament it is the Greek word Eirene.

The most basic meaning of Shalom is completeness or wholeness.

The word in Hebrew might refer to a stone that is whole in shape with no cracks. Or a completed stone wall that has no gaps and no missing bricks, or a finite moment in time.

Job said his tents were in a state of Shalom because he counted his flock and no animals were missing.

When King David visited his brothers in the battlefield he asked about their Shalom.

Shalom is in action when Jacob takes disparate pieces of fine cloth and stitches them together to make a cloak of inheritance and blessing for Joseph.

The core idea of Shalom is that life is complex and full of moving parts . It can be difficult to keep it all together.

When relationships and situations are out of alignment or something is missing, Shalom breaks down. Life is no longer whole; it needs to be restored.

In the book of Proverbs to reconcile broken relationships is to bring shalom.

And when rival kingdoms made Shalom in the bible it didn't just mean they just stopped fighting it meant they started actively working together for each other's benefit. Most kings in the bible failed to maintain a lasting shalom.

In our modern world nothing much has changed, how much confidence do you have in the word ceasefire ?

The Prophet Isaiah looked forward to a future King, a prince of Shalom whose reign would be without end and never breakdown.

A time when God would make a lasting unbreakable covenant of peace with His people and make right all wrongs and heal all that has been broken.

Isaiah is saturated with the language of Shalom ... Who ever heard of a wolf and a lamb grazing side by side ... of sheep who will never grow hungry, of a woman giving birth without labour; of deserts turning into gardens of bliss... OR everyone everywhere seeing the salvation of God.

Isaiah speaks of this peace in the context of walking in **obedience** with God. It is not offered lightly.

It is costly. Ultimately it would require the most costly act of **obedience** of all time. When Jesus became **obedient** unto death.

This is why Jesus' birth in the new Testament was announced as the arrival of **Eirene/or Shalom**.

Jesus came to offer his peace to others. My peace I give to you he said not as the world gives. Not like a meaningless ceasefire.

Jesus brokered this peace for us by voluntarily breaking Shalom with the Father though his death. This is why he broke the bread of his body in front of his friends..this why he called out on the cross

..My God my God,why have you forsaken me! And as he was summoned from the grave, Shalom was restored as he returned to the Fathers side.

So too on the cross, Jesus that source of living water, that great river of peace became drought stricken for us crying out

I Thirst!

And when at the end, the blood and water flowed from his side that shalom gushed into our world. It was complete ... he uttered those final words. **It is finished !**

The Walpiri people of the Tanami Desert don't have a single word for peace .. they have phrase

Karrinjarla muwa-jarri !!

(**Karrin - Jarla - Moowa Jarri** meaning ceasefire or something that was broken has been restored and is now complete. Directly translated it means Direct to English it translates as "It is finished"

Makarrata is a word like Shalom in the Yolngu language meaning coming together after a struggle, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace. The sacred word **Makarrata** was gifted by the Yolngu to the Uluru Statement but was consistently misrepresented in the referendum as meaning **Pay Back**.

Jesus offers us the sacred gift of peace... My peace I give to you

Living as people of Peace means participating in the life of Jesus who reconciled all things in heaven and on earth restoring peace through his death and resurrection.

This means that Jesus followers are now called to carry that peace.

Paul instructed local churches to keep their unity through the bond of peace which requires humility and patience and bearing with others in love . So peace requires a lot of work, because it's not just the absence of conflict but it is actively taking what's broken and restoring it.

Isaiah's message is one of victory, hope, comfort and restoration and Shalom. Hope Ginninderra parish is a community journeying together in a Spirit of shalom.

God has taken the disparate pieces of the fine cloth of Saint Pauls, Saint James, Saint Barnabas and All saints and has stitched them together to make a new garment of blessing and inheritance and He has named it Hope Ginninderra.

You embody Isaiah 43:19 TPT

Behold I am doing something new, something unheard of.

Even now it sprouts and grows and matures. Do you not perceive it?

I will make a way in the wilderness and open up streams in the desert. Rivers in the wilderness. To satisfy the thirst of my people, my chosen ones, so that you whom I have shaped and formed for myself for such a time as this, will proclaim my praise.

One of these new things will be your new shepherd whom you have not met. But God knows them intimately and is preparing them to join you. Like Ken, Like Peter, Like Helen you will recognize them as wearing the mantle of Shalom .