

# THE OLIVE BRANCH

March 2017 Brunswick Uniting Church Congregation Worship - 9:30 am

## > Meditation

### Lent



Lent is the 40 days leading up to Easter. We remember the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness being tested and are invited to join him on that spiritual journey into the depths of the heart. Our Lenten journey ends with the solemn remembrance of his death and resurrection, the means by which he enters into loving communion with all creatures in every place.

This year we began our Lenten journey by casting our minds back to Christmas. During Advent we worshipped around this sculpture in which the place of Jesus' birth was represented by strips of eucalyptus bark. On Christmas day, we reflected on the fact that, while tradition has Jesus being born in Bethlehem, the gospel story stresses that there was no place for him – no place in the inn nor under the authority of the Emperor who seeks to put everyone in their place through a census. Jesus is the one with no place who yet meets his people in every place and gives all a place in the life and love of God.

The fact that Eucalyptus bark was used in our Advent sculpture reminded us of our place in this ancient land Australia. The Christ of no place meets us at home here on Wurundjeri Country with its complex story of injustice and dispossession.

As part of our Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent) worship, we each took a piece of the bark from the Advent sculpture, prayed and placed it in a fire – later we were marked with a sign of the cross with ashes from that fire. Here is the reflection from that service.

*We hold eucalyptus bark from our place. As we hold it let us remember and hold in prayer all people, all creatures, in every place – especially those displaced or struggling to find their place in life.*

*As we hold it reflect on your place in the world and your journey of faith with Christ on the wilderness way. What are the trials you are facing and in which you pray for the Spirit's guidance?*

*"There was no place for him..." (Luke 2:7). Christ's rejection at his birth prefigures his final rejection on the cross where he laid down his life in love for all. This Lent, what will you lay down, and what will you take up for the sake of the world which God loves so much?*

*Now bring your bark and place it in the fire praying that the Holy Spirit will unite us with him in justice, peace and compassion.*

Ian Ferguson

