

**NATSIEC PRAYER CALENDAR 2006**  
**DECEMBER 2006**

**Friday 1 December**                      **World AIDS Day**

**Readings:**        Rev 20.1-4 & 20.11-21.2; Lk 21.29-33

**Pray for:** all victims of HIV/AIDS, their families and friends, and especially for HIV/AIDS sufferers in Africa and Papua New Guinea; and for support and education agencies amongst Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders

**Reflection:**        *There is a disease hardly named among us – shame-bringing, ignored and denied. Our silence gives it power – power to separate and destroy in the very moment of connection; power over our intimacy; power over our community and family life. Help us to educate, communicate, advocate. Help us to care for those who suffer this illness; help us to support them, that even in their dying we may find ways of new strength for our community. For when all is SAID and done AIS is not the end. Amen.* (Prayerline resource, NCCA-NATSIEC)

**Saturday 2 December**

**Readings:**        Rev 22.1-7; Lk 21.34-36

**Pray for:** Indigenous children at severe health risk; those ministering within Indigenous health; a renewed will to address the issues and support solutions

**Reflection:**        **People of Peace**  
*Our souls will always be together  
For we are as one  
One in Hope, One in Prayer, One in Reason  
Our Spirits **must** continue to work together  
Amongst our peoples, our lands  
At any given time and place  
We will muster that peace we seek  
It will manifest on this earth  
This is our duty as part of the **big PLAN**  
**TOGETHER WE WILL WIN**  
(Pearl Wymarra)*

**Sunday 3 December**                      **Advent Sunday**

**Readings:**        Jer 33.14-16; 1 Thess 3.9-13; Lk 21.25-38

**Pray for:** better employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders; greater childcare and support provision for Indigenous women; encouragement of Indigenous economic enterprises

**Reflection:** *Poverty is a potent cause of violence and, in a rich society such as Australia, an act of violence itself. Mainstream research thus reckons nearly half of all Indigenous children are in families with incomes below the Henderson poverty lines compared with around 18 per cent of non-Indigenous families. Two-thirds of Indigenous families are 'poor' or 'rather poor'.*

**Monday Dec. 4**

**Readings:**        Isa 2.1-5; Mtt 8.5-11

**Pray for:** restitution and justice for the 'stolen wages' of Indigenous families; an end to discriminatory behaviour in the workplace; Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islanders involved in employment issues and policy development

**Reflection:** *The playing field is not level, O God, and some people always play uphill.  
Grant us your justice, soon.  
The jobs are few and mostly dirty, O God, and some people always get the dirtiest.  
Grant us justice, soon.  
The pay is bad and the hours long, O God, and some people always get the worst shift.  
Grant us justice, soon.  
Pensions, holidays, early retirement – what are they God?  
– some people always seem to miss out.  
Grant us justice, soon.* (Prayerline resource, NCCA-NATSIEC)

**Tuesday 5 December**

**Readings:**        Isa 11.1-10; Lk 10.21-24

**Pray for:** Indigenous educational groups, courses, institutions and advisers

**Reflection:**        *Lead us out, where we can learn our law and teach it to our children.*

*Lead us out, where we can learn the law of others, and transform it for the good of all.  
Lead us out,  
where we can use the talents you gave us and not leave them buried in the ground.  
Lead us out,  
to the good land where your wisdom guides and there is respect for the truth*  
(Prayerline resource, NCCA-NATSIEC)

### **Wednesday 6 December**

**Nicholas of Myra**

**Readings:** Isa 25.6-10; Mtt 15.29-37

**Pray for:** all Indigenous language speakers, especially those for whom English is a very foreign tongue; Indigenous language courses and support projects

**Reflection:** *Word of God, you came among us without a word: a wordless infant, unable to speak  
We cannot speak the longings of all our hearts. The voices of many peoples have  
been silenced, the words taken, the sentences stopped up.  
They open their mouths, but their lips frame the sounds of invaders.  
Yet your Word is still spoken; rock, tree and bird send forth your story;  
dance and song and ceremony make present once more your voice.  
Take our few and halting words; take the steps of our dancing, the music of our  
hearts, and re-create with them a new Pentecost, where all may hear and understand.*  
(Prayerline resource, NCCA-NATSIEC)

### **Thursday 7 December**

**Readings:** Isa 26.1-6; Mtt 7.21-27

**Pray for:** greater cross-cultural understanding; action to end racism in church and society

**Reflection:** *'Racism and cultural violence separate us from God and from each other and are  
incompatible with the Christian gospel. Together with Christians from across the world, we affirm,  
that racism is a sin'* (National Council of Churches in Australia joint statement June 2003)

### **Friday 8 December**

**Readings:** Isa 29.17-24; Mtt 9.27-31

**Pray for:** all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in public life and political action; the development of new structures of self-determination by Indigenous Australian; a renewal of commitment by non-Indigenous Australians to just Reconciliation.

**Reflection:** *'How to fight back for Justice: 1. Accept personal responsibility for change, no  
matter how small. 2. Reflect on your own behaviour. 3. Identify what you have to give. 4. Act in your  
own context. 5. Collaborate with strategic partnerships. 6. Join. Network. Lobby. Advocate. 7. Treat  
everyone with respect. 8. Be inclusive. 9. Maintain your rage. 10. And finally, celebrate your  
successes.* (Human Rights: a 10 Point Plan – by Lowitja O'Donoghue)

### **Saturday 9 December**

**Readings:** Isa 30.19-26; Mtt 9.35-10.1 (2-4) 5-8

**Pray for:** Indigenous women in nurturing the environment; genuine Land Rights for Indigenous Australians; greater awareness of God's Creation and greater action to overcome human sin against it.

**Reflection:** *'I speak to you in every rock and creek;  
the gentle breeze in the eucalypt carries my whisper  
the crash of thunder my shout.  
I give you my life that you may live;  
I long to feed and nurture you at my breast,  
To refresh you with my flowing streams.  
But I am sick;  
my polluted waters can no longer restore;  
my eroded soils yield no fruit  
and their dusts carry death not life.  
Sick as I am, my love for you is so great  
I continue to pour out my life for your good;  
Raped and bruised though I am,  
whatever is mine is yours.  
My children, return to me;  
seek to give back what is taken.  
Where there is repentance, there is healing  
and every word of thanks restores.*

*My Spirit within you intercedes with you  
that all may be set free and brought to newness of life.  
Hear my yearning and taste my joy,  
In the Name of the One who walks humbly on the earth. Amen. (Penny Jones)*

### **Sunday 10 December International Human Rights Day**

**Readings:** Malachi 3.1-14; Phil 1.1-11; Lk 3.1-6

**Pray for:** the human rights of Indigenous peoples across the world

**Reflection:** *Human Rights Day marks the anniversary of the proclamation in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has been the basis of international agreements negotiated through the UN over the years, to affirm and codify human rights of all kinds. In Australia, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission administers federal legislation in the area of human rights, anti-discrimination, social justice and privacy.*

### **Monday 11 December**

**Readings:** Isa 35.1-10; Lk 5.17-26

**Pray for:** the work of the Christmas Bowl, and especially for Courage to respond to the challenge of Christ in all aspects of our lives and world; with thanksgiving for those who act with courage in so many hard places of our land and world

**Reflection:** *God of the still small voice, enable us to hear your truth amongst the myriad of other voices which surround us. Grant us wisdom to discern truth as it comes to us this day, as we light the candle of courage. Empower us through your Spirit to be strong to act upon truth as we seek to be the people of God: people prepared to stand for truth and to act courageously for its sake.*  
(Christmas Bowl Worship Resources 2005)

### **Tuesday 12 December**

**Readings:** Isa 40.1-11; Mtt 18.12-14

**Pray for:** involvement of Indigenous peoples in campaigns to address global poverty; and for the continuing development of the Make Indigenous Poverty History campaign.

**Reflection:** *The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by the world's governments do not specifically target Indigenous Peoples but Indigenous Peoples around the world are most affected by extreme poverty and usually rank at the bottom of most social and economic indicators.*

*Indigenous Peoples constitute more than 370 million of the world's population and make up approximately 90 percent of the world's linguistic diversity. Indigenous Peoples are largely invisible in the debate about the MDGs. The MDGs are outcomes focused and there is a danger that in defining and measuring poverty in such a way that the specific causes of poverty amongst Indigenous Peoples will not be addressed. The MDGs must be aligned with poverty reduction strategies that address the particular needs of Indigenous Peoples. Without the meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples their marginalisation and exclusion will continue....In practical terms this means that Indigenous Peoples must be involved in describing and defining what poverty is to them. Key Indicators must be devised by and be meaningful to Indigenous Peoples. Non – Indigenous Peoples must examine the structural exclusion that occurs at all levels of power and decision making. Measuring how many dollars a day somebody lives on will not encompass the wide gamut of factors that leads to indigenous poverty including; colonisation, loss of traditional lands, loss of languages, loss of traditional law and loss of cultural practices – to name a few.*

(NATSIEC Make Indigenous Poverty History briefing paper [www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph](http://www.ncca.org.au/natsiec/miph))

### **Wednesday 13 December**

**Readings:** Isa 40.25-31; Mtt 11.28-30

**Pray for:** the removal, by 2015, of the vast differences in income between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and non - Indigenous Australians; and for an elimination, by 2015, the number of people who suffer from hunger and malnourishment (the key targets of Make Indigenous Poverty History Millennium Goal One)

**Reflection:** *Indigenous Australians earn 62 % of the income of non – Indigenous people (HREOC).*

- *The disparity between Indigenous and Non – Indigenous has increased from 64 % in 1996 to 62 % in 2001 (HREOC).*
- *In 2001 the mean or average equivalised gross household income for Indigenous people was \$ 364 per week and \$ 585 for a non – Indigenous person (HREOC).*
- *Between 1996 and 2001 the average equivalised gross household income for Indigenous Persons rose by 11 % compared with 13 % for non Indigenous persons (HREOC).*
- *Indigenous people tend to be employed through CDEP or in more menial jobs.*

- *Within occupational categories indigenous peoples earn less. For example, Indigenous managers earned 81 % of non indigenous managers and Indigenous labourers earned 53 % of non indigenous labourers (HREOC).*

#### **Thursday 14 December**

**Readings:** Isa 41.13-20; Mtt 11.11-15

**Pray for:** equal education for Indigenous Australians, so that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of schooling; and for an end to malnourishment (the key targets of *Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal Two)

**Reflection:** *The apparent retention rate for Indigenous full-time students in 2004 from Year 7/8 to Year 10 was 86 % for non-Indigenous students it's 98.5 % - a difference of 12.1 %. This has improved since 1996 when the difference was 21.5 % (ABS AIHW 2005).*

*For Year 12 the apparent retention rate in 2004 was 40 % compared to 77 % for non-Indigenous students. Again the difference has improved since 1994 from 43 % to 37%. (ABS AIHW 2005).*

#### **Friday 15 December**

**Readings:** Isa 48.17-19; Mtt 11.16-19

**Pray for:** an end to gender disparity in education and the workforce by 2015; for a reduction in the rate of incarceration of Indigenous women; and for proper representation of Indigenous Women at local, State and Federal levels (key targets of *Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal 3)

**Reflection:** *Less than 10 % of Indigenous women have a post-school qualification and they are the least likely to be in the labour force with a participation rate of 43 %. Of those that are in the labour force 20 % were unemployed in 1996.*

*Indigenous women are also 19 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be imprisoned. This is on the increase as there was a 25 % increase in prison rates for women between 2000-2004.*

#### **Saturday 16 December**

**Readings:** Malachi 4; Mtt 17.10-13

**Pray for:** a reduction in the under-five mortality rate of Indigenous children. (the key target of *Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal 4)

**Reflection:** *Indigenous women are twice as likely to have a baby with low birth weight as non-Indigenous women. More than twice as many Indigenous infants die before their first birthday as non-Indigenous infants. Most deaths are as a result of congenital disorders, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, respiratory and cardiovascular disorders and accidents (SCRGSP2005).*

#### **Sunday 17 December                      3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Advent**

**Readings:** Zeph 3.14-20; Phil 4.4-7; Lk 3.7-18

**Pray for:** Right preparation for, and true celebration of, the real message of Christmas

**Reflection:** *As the birth of the king draws near/ We will gather to celebrate/ And we'll wish each other good tidings/ As we conquer our fears and hates.*

*And we'll tell our children great stories/ Of courage, kindness and love/ As we share our gifts with each other/ While our prayers drift to heaven above.*

*And we'll think of those less fortunate/ Whose dreams and rights have been slain/ And remember those who suffer./ Suffer through grief and pain.*

*And once more we'll rejoice with each other/ Through the carols our singing will bring/ Of the baby born in a manger/ Who was destined to grow to be king/ (A Christmas Prayer by Maisie Cavanagh)*

#### **Monday 18 December**

**Readings:** Jer 23.5-8; Mtt 1.18-24

**Pray for:** a reduction in the maternal mortality ratio for Indigenous Women. (the key target of *Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal 5)

**Reflection:** *Indigenous mothers made up 3.5 % of all mothers who gave birth in Australia in 2002. The total fertility rate for Indigenous Mothers is 2.15 babies compared to 1.76 babies in the total Australian female population. Teenage pregnancies are more common amongst Indigenous women. In 2003 the teenage birth rate was four times the overall Australian teenage birth rate. (ABS AIHW 2005)*

#### **Tuesday 19 December**

**Readings:** Judges 13.2-7,24-25; Lk 1.5-25

**Pray for:** the combating of Chronic and Communicable diseases among Indigenous Australians: increasing, by 2015, the life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to that of

the rest of Australia; and decreasing the rate of hospitalisation for communicable diseases. (*Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal 6)

**Reflection:** *According to the ABS life expectancy for indigenous men in 1996 – 2001 is 59.4 years and for Indigenous women it's 64.8 years. This is approximately 18 years younger than their non-Indigenous counterparts.*

*Australia has fallen behind life expectancy compared to other Indigenous Peoples. Taking into account discrepancies in the ways in which different countries estimate life expectancy according to HREOC data suggests that Indigenous males in Australia live between 8.8 and 13.5 years less than Indigenous males in Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. For women, it is 10.9 and 12.6 years less.*

### **Wednesday 20 December**

**Readings:** Isa 7.10-14; LK 1.28-38

**Pray for:** the integration of the principles of sustainable development into mining and land use agreements and the reversal of the loss of environmental and cultural resources; for the provision of adequate and safe housing; and for the creation of safe environments in which to live. (the key targets of *Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal 7)

**Reflection:** *Indigenous people are six times more likely to be murdered than non Indigenous people. (SCRGSP 2005). In the Northern Territory the leading cause of death for Aboriginal women is homicide (Bell in a speech to HREOC forum 16/09/2005). That is an outrageous statistic; more of our women are being murdered than are dying from illness or even through car accidents.*

*From 1999 – 2000 to 2002 – 2003 domestic altercation was the major motive (42.5 per cent) for most Indigenous homicides and continued to be throughout the four year period. Most Indigenous homicides involved persons who were unemployed at the time of the homicide. In 2002 / 2003 91.2 per cent of both victims and offenders were unemployed. All this is part of the cycle of poverty and disadvantage which the *Make Indigenous Poverty History* campaign seeks to help change.*

### **Thursday 21 December**

**Readings:** Song of Songs 2.8-14; Lk 1.39-45

**Pray for:** a new National Partnership for Development between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people: giving Indigenous people control over managing their own affairs, and ensuring that the wrongs of the past are acknowledged fully. (*Make Indigenous Poverty History* Millennium Goal 8)

**Reflection:** *it is often said that we spend a lot of money on health. This is not true. Non-Indigenous people have more spent on them by the Commonwealth than indigenous Australians.*

*For example: in 1998/99 it was estimated that for every \$1.00 spent per person for the general population on MBS and PBS, only \$0.37 was spent per Indigenous person; and Commonwealth spending on Indigenous people through programs it administers is about 18 % less than for non-Indigenous people (www.hollows.org).*

### **Friday 22 December**

**Readings:** 1 Sam 1.24-28; Lk 1.46-56

**Pray for:** hope for the suicidal and chronically depressed, and those driven to despair, apathy, drugs or alcohol; and for fresh energy for exhausted activists and demoralised campaigners for justice

**Reflection:** *Your people are weary, Timeless One/ your people are weary, and the road is long.*

*Your people are hungry, Generous One,*

*your people are hungry, and the food is scarce.*

*Your people lack hope, Never-Failing One,*

*your people lack hope, and they see no sign of light.*

*Your people are battered, Making One,*

*your people are battered, and they have no strength to rise.*

*Give to the weary, homecoming. Give to the hungry, bread.*

*Give to the hopeless, the light of your consolation.*

*Give to the battered, strength to rise up, and to all your people, justice and peace.*

### **Saturday 23 December                      Anniversary of Wik High Court Decision**

**Readings:** Malachi 3.1-4 & 4.2-3, Luke 1.57-66

**Pray for:** the Indigenous peoples of Australia as they continue to struggle for recognition and stewardship of their land; and for all Australians in the pursuit of just relationships

**Reflection:** *'My study (of the Wik decision)...going hand in hand with the close relationship which my family has formed with the Gungarri people, led our family to see that going into an access agreement with the traditional owners of the land was not a threat to our ability to operate our property exactly as*

*we had before. We came to see this as an appropriate owning of a past all Australians carry a burden for as people living in continuity with the tragic history of the past. For us it was not a burden but a privilege and we hope to continue to grow in friendship with the Gungarri as we learn to share a land we both love.'* (Camilla Cowley, leaseholder, Western Queensland, in *Walking Together* Dec 1997)

**Sunday 24 December                      4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent**

**Readings:** Micah 5.2-5a; Heb 10.5-10, Lk 1.39-45 (46-55)

**Pray for:** recognition of the Christ born amongst us today in the people, places and stories of our land

**Reflection:** *Amongst Christmas paintings produced by Aboriginal Christians in recent times has been an evocative painting by Kathy Doyle, with the help of Tamika Meredith, using symbols known to Rockhampton Murriss. In their art, the Rainbow Serpent Creator moves across the whole land, including the area shown by the totem symbol of the Darambul people, the Waterlilly. The serpent leads to where the star shines, the star that heralds the 'new day'. Woomeras convey the message of peace we bring as we welcome the new baby Jesus resting quietly in the Coolamon. The rising sun appears in the eye of the serpent.* (Murri Ministries)

**Monday Dec. 25 CHRISTMAS DAY**

**Readings:** Isa 9.2-7, Titus 2.11-14, Luke 2.1-14

**Pray for:** a joyful sharing of the presence of Christ amongst us.

**Reflection:** *'On the first Sunday of Advent a Coolamon is placed upside down on the floor below the advent wreath. The following is read on each Sunday in Advent: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who live in a land of deep darkness, on them light has shone." The Coolamon is an Aboriginal wooden receptacle used for carrying food and small babies. During her waiting time, Mary, like all expectant mothers, was preparing for her baby's needs, clothes, and cradle. During Advent, the Coolamon is upside down as a sign of waiting for food, or birth. Now on Christmas Day we turn the Coolamon upright, as a cradle for the newborn Child. And also as a symbol both of the birth of Jesus and the coming of the life-giving Eucharistic food. Let us walk in the light of the Lord.'* (Betty Pike, for Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Working Group on Aboriginal Matters Nov 2004)

**Tuesday 26 December                      Stephen, Deacon and Martyr**

**Readings:** 2 Chron 24.17-22, Acts 6.8-10 & 7.54-60, Matt 10.17-22

**Pray for:** the survivors of Tsunamis as they rebuild their lives; for government and aid agencies in their reconstruction work; and for all martyred for their faith today

**Reflection:** *God of hope and healing, beyond the terrors of tyranny and tsunami lies your transfiguring grace, a new dreaming of love and peace. Grant us a greater depth of relationship with one another, strength to work for justice and the integrity of all creation, and joy to share in your eternal presence. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*  
(A DOV Prayer for Asia by J.Inkpin)

**Wednesday 27 December                      St. John the Evangelist**

**Readings:** Prov 8.22-31, 1 John 1.1-5, John 20.2-8

**Pray for:** Wisdom and strength for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to proclaim the Gospel and new light of Christ in their own way

**Reflection:** *'Deep down, the old Aboriginal Dreaming and the Christian Dreaming have much in common. But there is one very significant difference. The old-time Dreamings, faith and practice were tied to particular places. Therefore, when those places, with their sacred stones, groves of trees, billabongs or cave-paintings were desecrated or destroyed or just neglected after the white man occupied the country, the myths and chants and rituals were forgotten, and the Dreamings were lost. The Christian Dreaming lives in and through a book, which is not tied to any one place, country, people or language. It can be interpreted by all peoples in their own way. And no people is more prepared to do this than the Aborigines, the people of the Dreaming.'* (A.P.Elkin *Aboriginal Belief and the Christmas Story*, New Dawn December 1970)

**Thursday 28 December                      Holy Innocents**

**Readings:** Jer 31.15-20, 1 John 1.5-2.2, Matt 2.13-18

**Pray for:** the cherishing of all human life, however weak or vulnerable; for babies and children in dire poverty or living under tyranny

**Reflection:** *'the notion that the suffering of, say, dying babies somehow participates in Christ's suffering and is part of some vast providential calculus whereby God balances accounts is a Stoic parody of Christian orthodoxy, and were it true Christian teaching I should advocate apostasy. There*

*is no biblical or doctrinal warrant for such a view... there is no spiritual fruit to be reaped from the drowning of tens of thousands of infants, for them or for us; the reign of death in all things is not the same as the justice of every particular death in the great scheme of things; that is why Christ came to save us from suffering and death, and why God will raise the dead. This world is fallen, and nowhere does God promise to make the sum total of its suffering add up to some greater spiritual truth. Rather, through taking our suffering upon himself, he rescues us from the meaninglessness of death, and even graciously allows us to offer up our own sufferings in obedience to him.'* (David Hart, Tremors of Doubt' article following the 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami, Wall Street Journal)

### **Friday 29 December**

**Readings:** 1 John 2.3-11, Luke 2.22-35

**Pray for:** the Christmas message to be made manifest in story and symbol, word and deed

**Reflection:** *Our Christmas crib is a Coolamon. Designed by Vera Tyson, crafted and painted by the workers of the Gangulu Factory, Mount Morgan, we are able to represent a very relevant Christmas message. For the weeks leading up to Christmas, the Coolamon has been turned over. There is painted a simple design showing people gathered at the four corners of this land, waiting... Then in our Christmas ceremony, at the point when the call of Goo-goo-gaga sounds to awaken us for the new dawn, the Coolamon is turned upright, never to be empty, always full of food. There is represented Wandjina, who with the animals has also waited silently-seeing since the time of the old creation for the sun to shine on this new life come to birth. And painted on the Coolamon is the story of the one whose life we are celebrating. Here is the Happiness of birth and the sadness of death combined, but those like the Earth Mother with eyes to see will recognise the JOY in being given the Eucharistic Lord, represented by the Pelican. This ancient and new message is for today's Murri who with their ancestors stand on Mother earth to welcome the coming of the light. (red, Gold and Black flowers on a tray of soil). (Murri Ministries)*

### **Saturday 30 December**

**Readings:** 1 John 2.12-17, Luke 2.36-40

**Pray for:** the Christ who comes to us from across time and space and yet who is born in the very heart of our lives and culture

**Reflection:** *The altar screen in All Saints Anglican Church on Thursday Island shows Christ at the centre amidst the sea and islands of the Torres Strait: a figure beyond our individual lives and particular places. Yet this is the same Christ, Torres Strait Islanders bear witness, who is born on every beach and in the heart of every island and islander, recognised and yet to be recognised, the Light of the World.*

### **Sunday 31 December                      1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Christmas                      A Blessing**

**Readings:** 1 sam 2.18-20,26; Col 3.12-17; Lk 2.41-52

**Pray for:** good endings and new beginnings in the love of Christ who makes all things new

**Reflection:** As we come to the end of 2005, let us pray a blessing on ourselves and our world.

*May the blessings of God flow deep within us.*

*May the rains soften the tensions within us.*

*May the power of the ocean waves steady and strengthen us.*

*May the wisdom of the ages open us to mystery.*

*Let the music of the forest delight us,*

*And the simplicity of the wildflowers captivate our hearts.*

*May we move gently through life,*

*caring for the gifts of creation*

*and always ready to celebrate together.*

(Michael Gormley SSC)