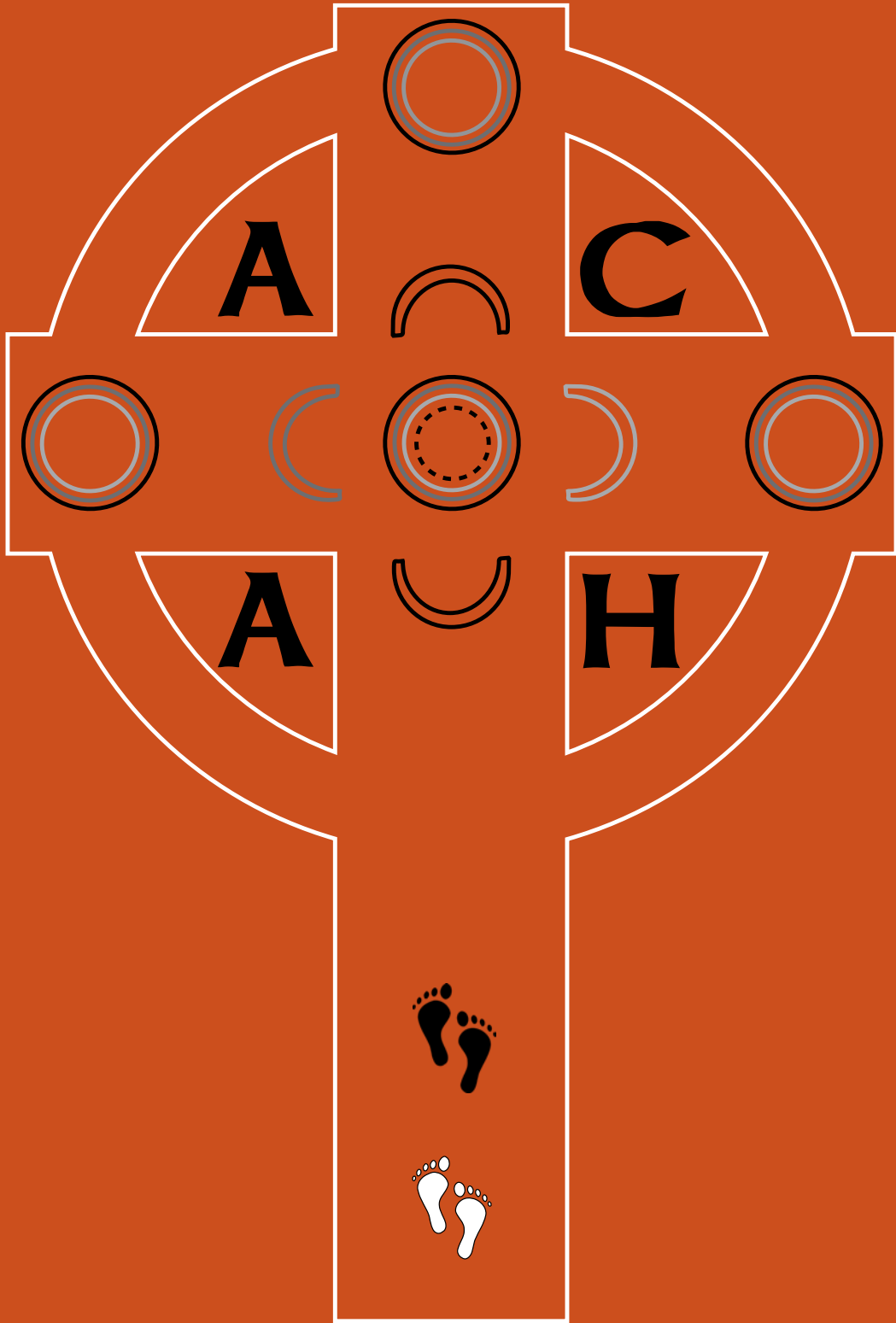


Australian Community

Aíðan and Hílda



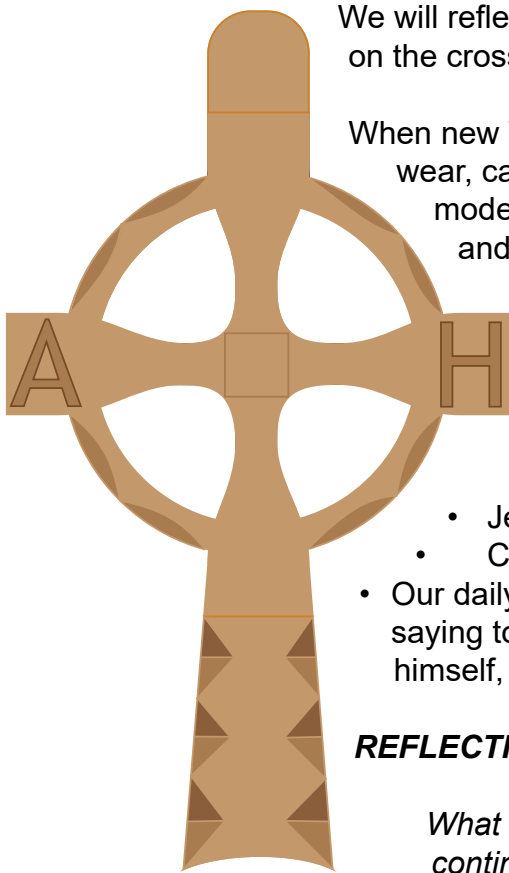
The Meaning of the ACAH Cross

The Meaning of the Australian Community Aidan and Hilda Crosses

The Australian Community of Aidan and Hilda (ACAH) have two crosses. The first is the cross given to new Wayfarers when they take their first Pilgrimage journey and is the international cross for The Community of Aidan and Hilda.

The second cross is the Australian community logo, a stylised version of the international community cross. The Australian logo cross, is unique in the International Community of Aidan and Hilda and displays a rich diversity of faith in our Divine Creator.

International Aidan and Hilda Cross



We will reflect on the wooden cross handed to all new Wayfarers, and then on the cross used in the Australian logo.

When new Wayfarers receive their Community cross, they are asked to wear, carry or display the cross thoughtfully. This cross speaks to modern people like the signs and parables that Jesus spoke about and other symbols in the New Testament books. Our cross overflows with meaning and invites frequent meditation.

The crossed central beams are meant to lead us to the heart of God (John 3:16). The eternal truth of this passage also reflects:

- Jesus was crucified on a wooden cross.
- Christ died for our sins.
- Our daily challenge is in Jesus's words from Luke 9:23 And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

REFLECTION

What do the words, "take up my cross" mean to me? What must I continually let go of (deny within myself) to follow Him?

The circle of the cross is an inclusive, universal symbol of wholeness. It reflects the inclusive nature of God to all mankind. We sometimes circle a place or person the circle in prayer is used to hold harm out and good in. Circling prayers are a rich part of our heritage. In psychology the circle is a primal symbol of wholeness and completeness.

The base of the cross is its broadest part. We are called to be rooted in the soil of creation, but also in the soil of sanctity. We are called to be earthy and earthed Christians – to be real, practical. To find God in the earth, which is our home and all we do. "Holy people draw earthy things to themselves" said Hildegard of Bingen.

REFLECTION

"Humanity, take a good look at yourself. Inside, you've got heaven and earth, and all of creation. You're a world—everything is hidden in you". Hildegard of Bingen. If you were a circle that contains the earth, what parts of yourself still need to be evangelised?

Dwell upon the saying, "Holy people draw earthly things to themselves". What does this saying speak to you of?

The top of the cross we wear, narrows, and reaches as it were, into heaven. It points us to prayer, visions, 'thin places', and a reminder of the final passage from this life. We make time to be alone with God to become aware of heaven in the ordinary things of life.

Christ's arms were stretched out and nailed to the arms of the cross. The Divine Christ stretches out His arms eternally in compassion. The left arm pictures for us suffering love. Forgiveness towards all. The right arm pictures for us the desire to reach out to everyone. This also provides us with a way of praying, standing with arms outstretched with a heart of love, compassion and forgiveness for all (cross shaped praying).

REFLECTION

Stand with your arms stretched out. Allow Christ to fill you with empathy. Let forgiveness from your heart flow out of your left arm. Let your right arm embrace the world with Christ's compassion. Become the tree through which forgiveness flows out and compassion flows in. What life's issues could you apply this to?

The two cross beams also speak of symmetry. One side balances the other. The lives of members in our community seek a life of balance (a rhythm) between input and output, work and prayer, suffering and celebration, withdrawal and outreach. The crossed beams go deeper, higher and wider than this world.

There are four spaces in our cross. On one hand they are a blank space, but in another, the rest would be nothing without them. God makes spaces for us. We need to make spaces for ourselves and for others. One space may represent for us solitude, another Scripture reflection. One space may represent blessings and another desert struggles. One space could be fun, another exercise, or unique past time of life. Each member is unique and we all have different spaces. Regardless, one space is always kept to be with God alone. Spaces change with different seasons in our lives, yet they are always there.

The Australian Aborigines look at the spaces between the stars to see the outline of the emu and know then is the time to search for emu eggs. The spaces between the stars is the emu shape, not the pattern the stars themselves make. Settlers to Australia tend to focus on what is in front of us, but the spaces call us to look beyond into the mystery of God revealing himself to us through what seems like emptiness. The desert places of Scripture are but one example.

REFLECTION

Reflect on God's love to you, and as best as you are able, what he gave up for you. Reflect on how God has demonstrated his Love to you personally. What response is that calling from within you? What ways can you love God more?

What spaces have you committed to? What would be four spaces you believe God wants you to create, knowing one is always left for time with God alone?

The cross that we wear has an 'A' on one arm of the cross and a 'H' on the other. Aidan and Hilda. Aidan of the gentle heart and backbone of steel. The name which means 'flame' and asks us to pass on the flame to every land and generation. Hilda was a woman of wisdom, spiritual mother, foster of callings, who unlocked the song of the heart in the poor. Whose counsel was sought by

people far and wide. She struggled for both the rich and poor to know God. Both modelled heaven on earth.

Together they stand for male and female, masculine and feminine, equal but different. Working as soul friends to serve the common good. The cross with Christ on it becomes the tree of death. The crucifix. The cross without Christ on it because He has risen, becomes the tree of life.

In the middle of the cross we wear is a little raised area with an indent in the middle. The heart of it all. This is not only the heart of a piece of wood, it also represents the heart of our Divine Creator. The place where the Trinity communes and with infinite hospitality, invite us in, and ask us to reflect about this love. The cross is a reminder of our journey to the heart of God.

REFLECTION

As you reflect on your present journey with God, what parts have been difficult? What parts surprised you? What is helping you deepen your relationship with God?

(We thank Ray Simpson, Founding Guardian of The Community of Aidan and Hilda for these insights)

REFLECTION

The cross can also reflect an internal focus for community members. It can be used as a time of personal reflection in our daily walk.

Our Three Life-giving Principles, Simplicity, Purity and Obedience are taken from vows from the beginning of the monastic movement. At the start of communal monastic living, around the 4th century, there were four vows, Chastity, Poverty, Obedience and Stability. Over time, this was reduced to three, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience. As a community in Australia, we seek a lifestyle where there are no vows but instead, life-giving principles to live by. Of the three vows, we have retained Obedience. Philippians 2:8 tells us three aspects of Christ's life. Jesus self-emptied, humbled himself and was obedient, even to death. Therefore our cross contains the three elements as a personal challenge, just as the first monks did in their vows.

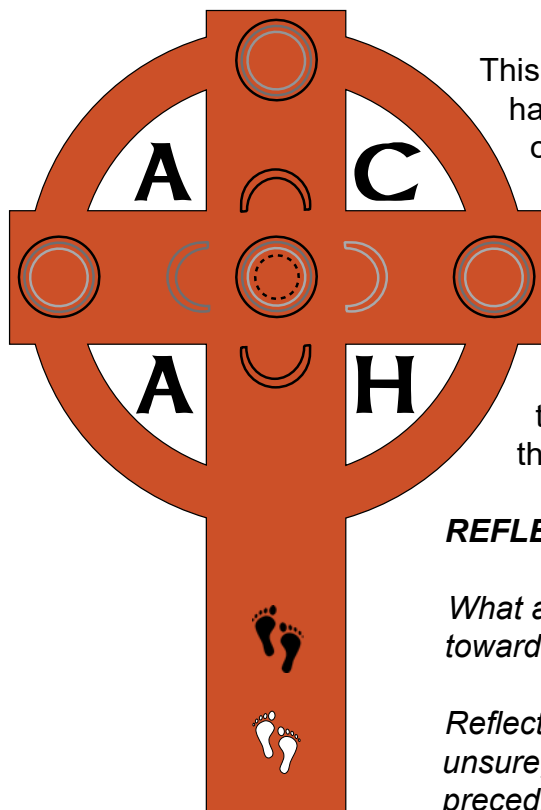
Our cross, the Columba Cross, has a circle around the top three arms of the cross with the cross central to the circle. The circle on the top three arms represents a Celtic monks life (or us) of self-emptying (left hand arm), humility (top arm) and Obedience (right arm) to loving God. Radiating out from the center is the cross of Jesus. Loving Jesus means the circle remains intact, connected to the three top arms of the cross. The circle is us, the cross is Jesus. The interconnected parts of the circle on the beams of the cross remind us of staying connected to Jesus.

The circle's connection (us) to the base of the cross is the monks love of Jesus (notice it is the longest and if in the ground would be like a tree with three branches). Many monks found if they were not having a loving relationship with Jesus, no amount of struggling with the top three was going to work.

We can start at the base where our love of Jesus starts and moving clockwise know that loving Jesus leads to the left arm, a need to self-empty, which leads to the top arm, humility, which leads to the right arm, obedience, which leads back to the base, loving Jesus. Thus the circle is complete and unbroken and thus continues. When discouraged, struggling in our faith, or encountering the storms of life, is not the foot of the cross where we should sit? In the arms of Christ!

Loving God leads us all on a journey. Is not the circular one around the arms of the cross the most precious of all.

The Australian Cross Logo



This cross also reflects all the meaning of the wooden cross handed to new Wayfarers. The Australian logo is a stylised outline around the Celtic Columba Cross or Ionic Cross (Iona).

The symbols of feet, at the base of the cross represent the Indigenous Nation (black) and all Settlers to Australia, including immigrants (white). The white feet are at the bottom. Settlers must first meet and be reconciled with the Indigenous people. Then together, they can journey to the center of the cross.

REFLECTION

What are past history lessons we can learn about injustices towards Aboriginal people?

Reflect on ways settlers can be reconciled to Indigenous people? If unsure, sit with an Aboriginal elder where you live and ask the two preceding questions.

At the out most points of the cross (top, left and right) are three circles with two inner circles. The three represent the Trinity. Each has different shading of black, grey and a tinted white. Black represents God. Grey is the Holy Spirit and tinted white is Jesus Christ. Even though Jesus Christ has risen, he also came and died for all mankind. Thus, the colour, tinted white.

The symbols at the center of the cross (a circle with four half circles) represent an aboriginal meeting place. The center circle contains the same two inner circles (Trinity) and an additional broken line circle. The broken line circle represents the broken nature of man and the need to meet with God to be reconciled. The half circles represent a place for four people to sit and meet around the meeting place.

There are four meeting places around the center of the cross, three of which are for the Trinity. Black (top - God), grey (left - Holy Spirit) and tinted white (right - Jesus Christ). The fourth place, the black half circle towards the bottom of the cross is a seat for all mankind and a seat of unity. Notice it is the same colour as God, reflecting whose image we were made in.

The symbol of the meeting place is on Australian land, originally land belonging to the Indigenous nations but were dispossessed. The central meeting place land, which is holy, needs to be healed before this meeting takes place. Healing the land by studying the history of our place. 'Our place' refers to the land we all actually live on.

For Aboriginal people 'our place' includes place where they have previously lived or where their ancestors have lived. It has the element of personal/local connection. Their land is much more than just a dwelling-place. It is a living, breathing sacred ongoing text that continues to speak and guide its people. It is through celebrating the good, remembering the injustices, and changing our behaviour accordingly that both black and white feet can sit at the meeting place.

REFLECTION

The Australian logo reflects balance and harmony. Reflect and list ways you can create more balance and harmony in your life.

What ways have settlers ignored nurturing the land in Australia? Reflect on ways settlers today can nurture and heal the land? List and implement ways you can be more harmonious with the land.

Prayfully consider ways you can support other cultures within Australia.

What areas of injustice are important to you? Pray that God will reveal, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, you can speak out with love and respect for all.

The letters 'A' 'C' 'A' 'H' in the blank spaces signify Australian Community Aidan and Hilda. The logo is designed in such a way, that even if a person cannot read, they can follow the story within the cross.

REFLECTION

One of our Waymarks is Creation Care. Reflect on ways you can care for the land where you live.

One of our Waymarks is Healing what is broken, in ourselves, others, communities, the world. Starting with yourself and moving outward to others around you and your local community, list at least five broken places that need healing. Through prayer, work over your list in the next twelve months and discover by loving others what can be healed.

(The Australian logo was designed with the help of Aboriginal Anglican minister, Glenn Loughrey)

Australian Resources

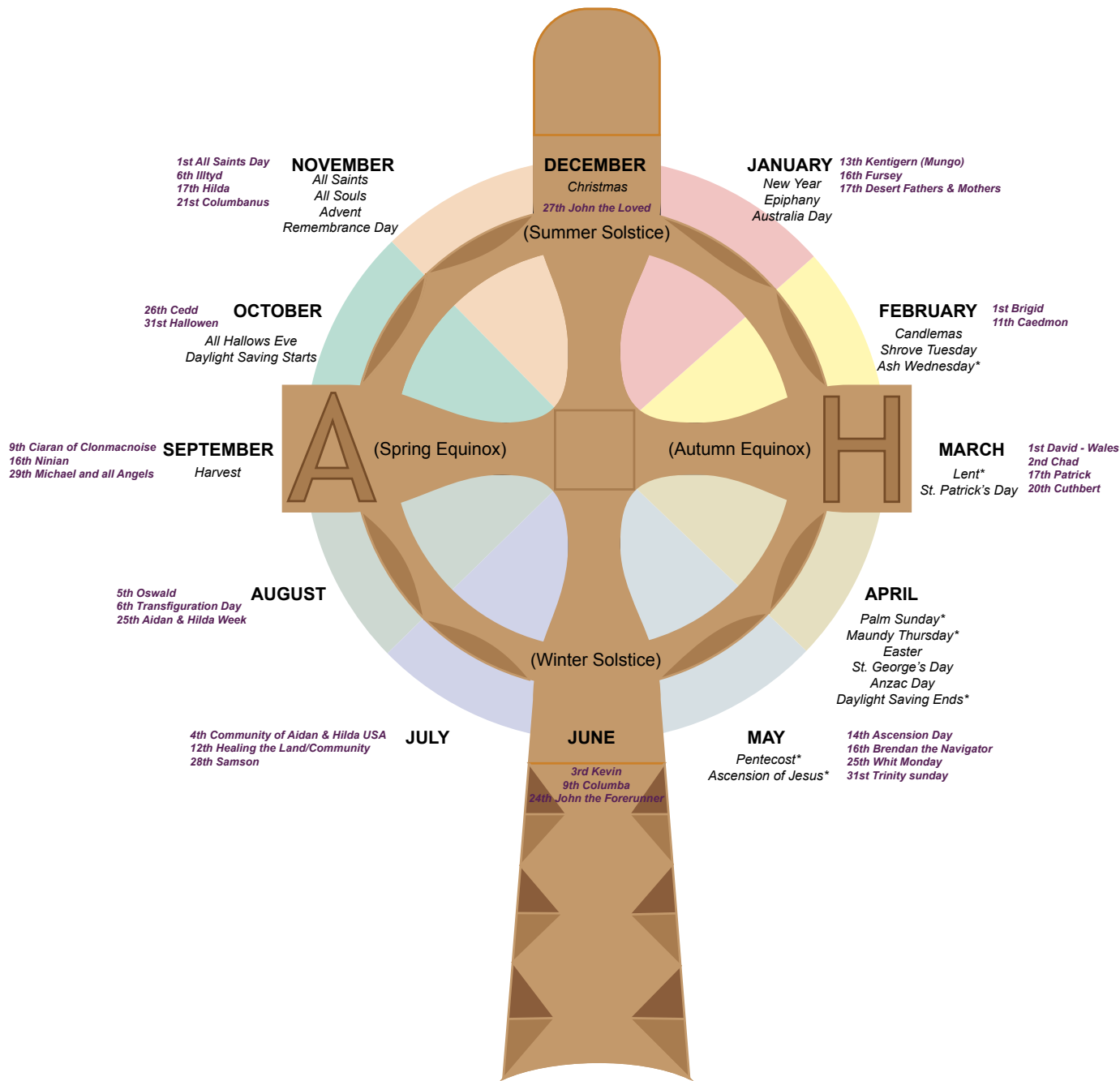
The Biggest Estate on Earth - How Aborigines Made Australia by Bill Gammage

Dark Emu Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident? by Bruce Pascoe

Gondwana Theology by Garry Worete Deverell

Another Time Another Place - Towards An Australian Church by Glenn Loughrey

Australian Community Aidan and Hilda Yearly Calendar



* Date of event can move to different times in the month depending on Year. For example, Easter's date is set as the first Sunday after a full moon, on or after the Spring (Vernal) Equinox. although in Australia, Easter is held during our Autumn (Autumnal) Equinox. Therefore, Easter, Lent, Pentecost, etc, move each year according to date of when the full moon occurs.
Dates in Purple are specific to the Aidan & Hilda Community