

# Mamrebillia

Christmas 2010

## A word from the Director

Hello to you all and welcome to the last edition of Mamrebillia for 2010.

It has been somewhat of a very diverse year for Mamre. We have welcomed new families this year, and we have said farewell to others, welcomed new staff and said goodbye to others. We have been navigating new systems of Government funding, new legislative changes and new reporting requirements. We have trialled new ways for people to feel connected with the Mamre Community, and we have continued to ask how we can deepen existing connections. This, year in and year out, is what Mamre strives to do – keep building on and building on and building on. This is also what families constantly do – keep building on the strengths, building resilience and building a good life for their family members, and there is always a deep appreciation from the staff at Mamre that families are so willing to invite us to join them through their own journey. On behalf of Mamre, I say a big thank you to you all for this privilege. To all of you who have contributed in telling your story through Mamrebillia this past year, and to all of you who have been a part of Mamre, thank you!

There are several articles in this edition that tell the story of “imagining better” and then making it happen – believing that everyone can learn, believing in a genuine offer to embrace a young teenager in the Girl Guides, believing that three young people can participate and contribute within their local communities, AND create their own businesses.

These messages are very similar to what a lot of Christmas wishes reflect – good will, the Spirit of giving and receiving and being part of celebration and life.



We hope that the stories told this edition reflect each of our own lives and that we all experience the goodwill, the Spirit and the celebration of the season.

Always our hope and aim is to continue to explore new ways to respond to families individually, and to inspire change in the belief that people with disability and their families can live, and are living rich and meaningful lives. Next year will also be another year of building on what already is but before we look ahead to 2011, let's take some time to reflect on 2010 and celebrate with our loved ones the true Spirit of Christmas.

Peace to you all over Christmas and into the New Year.



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Welcome to the Christmas edition of Mamrebillia. I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to everyone involved in producing this newsletter - to the members of the Mamrebillia committee, all the various contributors in 2010 and the supportive Leadership Team and Governance Board. The committee look forward to continuing to provide a forum for stories and keeping you informed in 2011. Wishing you all the best for Christmas and a peaceful and joy filled New Year.

Peter Vacca

Merry  
Christmas

## An "ordinary" life

In 2006 the Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) Association chose the Gold Coast as host city for its National Conference. As Coordinator for Qld families I helped with a variety of aspects, one of which was setting up a break out room for family members with CdLS and their younger siblings.

At the time, my two eldest daughters were members of the Everton Park Girl Guides, so I approached them to see whether they were interested in providing support, entertainment and general supervision in the break out room. They readily accepted and arrived with toys, DVDs and lots of enthusiasm. However, as most people with CdLS have challenging behaviours, by the end of the day the guides were looking more than a little weary.



So it was with some trepidation that, early this year, I dropped into the Guides' hut one Saturday afternoon to again appeal for assistance at a CdLS Clinic Day. As luck would have it, Nalkari, my daughters' Brownie guide leader, was on duty. After catching up on each other's families, and discussing the reason for my visit, Nalkari asked why I had not followed through with signing up Laura as a girl guide.

Over the years Laura often ac-

companied me when dropping off her sisters at guides and Nalkari grew to know her. As mums we sometimes shared stories of our kids and I often talked about our hopes that Laura could lead an "ordinary" life and have similar experiences to her sisters. At the time, Nalkari offered her assistance if we decided that guides was a suitable activity for Laura. Unfortunately, around that time my daughters left guides and project "Laura – Girl Guide" was put on the back burner – until a Saturday afternoon in early 2010 when Nalkari again pledged her support.

So with Mamre's help we employed support workers and Laura started attending girl guides. She was initiated as a fully fledged girl guide on 14 August and already has a number of badges on her sash. It hasn't always been smooth sailing, as some weeks she is not as keen to attend and protests loudly. At other times her infectious laugh can be heard around the group and draws the other girls to her like a magnet. So far canoeing has been her favourite event.

Meanwhile, back at the CdLS Clinic Day, the Everton Park Guides Branch leader again readily agreed to provide support and put out a general invi-



tation to all the guide groups. We were overwhelmed at the interest and eventually had to put a cap on the number who could attend. Most of the guides who volunteered had provided support in 2006 and were anxious to catch up with the CdLS kids and their siblings.

This time we were a little better organised and we set up groups of guides and allocated people with CdLS and their siblings appropriately. Everyone seemed to fare a little better and there were still plenty of smiles and energy at the end of the day. Feedback from the guides was very positive – "very rewarding"; "I had so much fun"; "tiring but so worth it". And from the parents – "it was great to see the kids have so much fun"; "I was able to listen to the doctors without having my daughter climbing all over me".



The Girl Guides have been a part of our family for many years and like her sisters, Laura may eventually decide that she has outgrown them. But whilst she is still happy to go and wonderful people like Nalkari are willing to pledge their time and support, we will continue – one Saturday at a time on her journey of an "ordinary" life.

**Rose Humphrey**

## EVERYONE CAN LEARN!

I have always had a passion for education and learning. This made high school a great experience for me. Throughout my high school years, I was taught many more things that prepared me for higher learning. It all started when I walked through the gates of my high school for the first time in grade 8.

Grade 8 was an exciting time of anticipation and change. Many of my friend's came from primary school which gave me a sense of familiarity. One of the challenges of grade 8 was finding my way around the school. Throughout the year I became use to the school's surroundings.

I found the curriculum to be different and more challenging than primary school; it was a greater work load. The subjects were more in depth and interesting. Drama was a fun subject and to do it as a proper subject was exciting. I enjoyed performing on the stage. Grade 8 was a different atmosphere and felt more organised.

As grade 9 approached I was more settled at high school. It was not just the standard subjects, the subject selection was more diverse. This gave me the chance to meet new peers and teachers. In grade 9 I received the Bronze Principal's award for receiving three very high achievements. It was a great feeling to be acknowledged as a good student by receiving this academic award. This capped off the year nicely!

Grade 10 felt like the calm before the storm, because it

was before grade 11 when the pressure began. My best friend left school that year to go to another. It wasn't a good feeling being without my friend as we spent a lot of time together during class and lunch time. Despite losing my friend I kept focussed on my studies because I loved to learn. I spent more time with my other friends. I made a point of catching up with my best friend out of school. All of these experiences lead me up to the two senior years to come.

Grade 11 was much harder than the other years. They say grade 12 is the hardest, but they are much mistaken. That year we had to choose subjects for grade 11 and 12. I chose

*"So to those who say  
that people with a  
disability can't do  
something, I say  
everyone can learn!"*

live production theatre and events. Most of the teachers were more supportive. Grade 11 was a rather big year that made grade 12 easier.

Grade 12 was easier because I was use to the type of things that they do in high school. Legal studies became a bit too hard that year so I decided to drop that subject. Towards the end of the year I received the Quota Award for my effort and enthusiasm in my work.

The formal was a great night at a lovely venue by the Brisbane River. It was even better than I expected. People had such a great time. We all got suited



up; suit, tie and my dark silver hat. Families were invited for pre-formal drinks. The rest of the night was filled with a three course meal, dancing and photography.

The graduation ceremony was fantastic. It was all about us students. We were all introduced to the audience. Then there were a number of speeches all entertaining and humorous. Then the principal presented our certificates to us. There were a couple of power points, one showing pictures throughout the year and one with the annual pictures, showing each student several times through their high school life. Then we got to say thank-you and farewell to our teachers.

School has set me up for higher education. I will be going to TAFE next year studying Certificate 3 in Events. I will also be having work experience in a photographic shop. I intend attending university lectures in creative writing. I will always be interested in education and learning. So to those who say that people with a disability can't do something, I say everyone can learn. Do what you like to do and the rest will follow!

**Robert Walmsley-Evans**



## CALLING FOR SUBMISSIONS! Mamre Community Calendar 2011/2012

Are you living in your own home?  
Does your neighborhood get together on a regular basis?  
Have you been actively involved at a school sporting event, fete or music concert?  
Do you operate your own local business or have a job that you love?  
Are you a member of a club, association or community group?  
Would you like to share your story and be published in the Mamre Community Calendar?

Write a small paragraph (200-350 words) about your experience and submit it to Jenn at Mamre – [jenn.bonnett@mamre.org.au](mailto:jenn.bonnett@mamre.org.au) or phone (07) 3291 5888 for

more information\*. Submissions due by

\*Not all applications will be successful due to the limit of 12 months in the Calendar year. Applicants must also consent to having their writing and photograph published in the Mamre Community Calendar 2011/2012.

### Anne McDonald

Anne - memorable author, courageous fighter for the rights of people with disability, and true friend - died suddenly and unexpectedly on 22 October. Anne, together with her dear friends Rosemary Crossley and Chris Borthwick, worked tirelessly to promote the rights of people with disability on a national and international level. In 1980 the movie "Annie's Coming Out" was released based on the book written by Anne. Anne communicated through facilitated communication, and in doing so, paved the way for FC to be recognized and used as a legitimate form of communication.

She will be mourned by many people around the world whose lives she touched.



# Introducing S.T.A.R.S.

## A journey through Self Management

After two and a half years working as a Post School Coordinator for a large not for profit organisation I had become disillusioned with the system. I felt the young people I was there to support weren't being offered what they needed to succeed in life. I wanted to make a difference to their lives but felt the system had beaten me. I handed my notice in. I felt I wasn't being true to the families or myself by staying there.

After handing my notice in I was approached by a number of the families I had been working with asking if I would start up on my own. This was my opportunity to make the difference I had always wanted to make. We had many meetings discussing and planning the way forward. It wasn't easy but we were all determined to make it work. We approached as many different organisations as possible to see if they could help us and advise us. We got some great advice but we were very choosy about who we wanted to help us. Quite a number of organisations said they would help us, but then wanted to change our vision slightly. This was not an option, we all felt very strongly about this. The families and their children knew what they wanted for the future and we didn't think anyone else had the right to change that. We eventually found Mamre and what a find it was! They actually listened and advised us, they didn't try to change our vision, they wanted to help. It felt that we were part of their family. With Mamre's help we developed our program.

We called ourselves 'S.T.A.R.S.' which stands for 'Seeing The Ability Really Shine.' Our first day was Monday 5<sup>th</sup> July. We have been operating now for 5 months and I am happy to say that it is succeeding beyond all expectations. Allyce, James and Brody all have volunteer work at different places. Allyce has started her own doggie day care business and is booked up over the Christmas period.



Brody's volunteer work has led to him being offered a volunteer placement outside of the program hours. He has also started up his own leaflet delivery business. It is going well and he has regular work each week. James lives on a farm and has begun to grow veggies to sell at his local markets. Along the way we have made many new friends in the community and continue to develop new relationships and gain support. James, Brody and Allyce recently earned enough money to pay for all three of them to go away for a couple of days to SeaWorld resort on the Gold Coast. They also had enough to swim with the dolphins, which they all thought was a fantastic experience. We are constantly developing and evaluating the program and hope to go from strength to strength.

I feel that I am the luckiest person alive. I am being paid for something I've always wanted to do. I am making a difference to the lives of three very special young people. We have a lot of fun and laugh a lot but we also work very hard to achieve our goals.

I think a lot of families are not aware that they can self manage their funds, I work in a Special School part time in transition and I know that not one of the families knew that they could self manage their funds.

I would encourage families to look into self managing their funds because through self managing, they can achieve so much more than what is offered out there at the moment. You just need a strong vision, a solid plan and determination.

**Fiona**  
**Program Manager**  
**S.T.A.R.S**

## MAMRE'S INSPIRIT PROGRAM

My name is Dianne Mandeville and I started working at Mamre at the beginning of 2009 as a Development Worker with Pave the Way. I stayed in this role until the beginning of August this year when I started working as the Inspirit Development Worker based at the Newmarket office. I also started working in a part-time capacity with Bespoke Lifestyles and so I now have a dual role here at Mamre.

Before working for Mamre I was a secondary school music teacher for many years. However, my most important role has been as the mother of two adult children – my son Robbie who is now 24 years old and my daughter Laura, 22. I also recently became a proud grandmother. Robbie has multiple disabilities and so I have been involved within the disability sector since he was born. I have worked very hard over the years at building an inclusive and meaningful life for Robbie and am convinced that families are the best vehicle for ensuring that their children live 'typical' lives within their own community regardless of the level of their disability.

You will already have received correspondence from me advertising upcoming events that have begun with the words "**Inspirit – to encourage, embolden and inspire**" and you may have wondered where this has come from and why you are no longer hearing about the Parent Program.

The transition from the Parent Program to Inspirit has actually happened over a number of years. In 2005 some of you may have attended a large three day event that was named "Inspirit". However, the move to an ongoing Mamre Inspirit Program came out of Michael Kendrick's review of Mamre in 2006. His recommendation was that "Mamre should continue to expand in its public change agency role such that it takes on equal significance with its service delivery role" In September 2007 it was decided that Mamre would continue to expand this public change agency role but it was also decided that this activity would remain subsidiary to the family support work and not impact on it. It was proposed at this time that in order to maintain the focus and intent of this public change agency work, the program would be badged, "Inspirit – to encourage, embolden and inspire" It was also decided to use the capacities of the Parent Program and the latent Sibling Program as its base.

Traditionally, the Parent Program had focused on rest and recreation for parents, and arranged events to meet that need. However the idea had always been that these events would also foster connections with others and strengthen families to work towards creating a good life for their family member and themselves.

In 2008, the objectives of the



parent program became more intentionally to have an identifiable increase in vision, capacity and empowerment of families, to support parents to have greater awareness of the challenges they face and to identify and to support parents to take practical action and leadership. By the end of 2009 the change had taken place from the Parent Program to Inspirit.

In Mamre's current strategic plan, the goal around Inspirit is that it will effect change and inspire, encourage and embolden families, the disability sector and the broader community to create rich, meaningful and inclusive lives with and for people with a disability. (a big task!!) This year, Inspirit events have included training in Social Role Valorisation; the Creating Meaningful Lives weekend workshop; a series of evening conversations around different topics, Sunday workshops about Building Community Networks; a women's retreat; a women's weekend at Stanthorpe and

to end off the year - Christmas craft coffee mornings. Planning for next year's program will take place in December and I have asked the Keyworkers to seek feedback as to how the Inspirit program can best suit the needs of families given its overall aim of effecting change so that people with disability can live inclusive and meaningful lives. I realise that for many families, especially those with young children, attending events can be difficult. So, if this is the case for your family but you would really like to attend an Inspirit event, please talk to your Keyworker or to me about how we can work with you to

make it possible. Lately, the majority of participants at Inspirit events have been parents with older children however I would really like to encourage younger families to come along and to emphasise that most of what is presented and discussed is relevant for any age or stage of development. The strategies and decision making that takes place in a child's early development really sets the foundations for their adult life. Also, it can be really beneficial for families to connect with others in a similar situation and to learn from and be inspired by others. I know that for me, Robbie's life began to change for the

better when I started to think outside the boundaries of what I had originally thought was possible, challenge myself and began to seek out alternative options for him. I have to say that none of this was easy but I can honestly say that not only has his life improved, but so have ours!! I will be in touch early in the New Year with what is proposed for the 2011 Inspirit Program. I would really love to get to know more of the Mamre families and hope to see more of you at the various events next year.

Best wishes,

**Dianne Mandeville**

## Jan-al Cards



Allison Jones

**M**y name is Allison Jones. I am starting a business called "Jan-al Cards". I will be making cards and providing a service to organisations who wish to mail Christmas cards to their members. I will design, print and mail the cards for various organisations. Mamre is the first to take advantage of my services. I also have a range of cards to sell to individuals. I will have a stall with some of my cards for sale at the upcoming Mamre Christmas carols celebration. I hope to see you there.

**Allison Jones**

### LIFE MEMBERSHIP!

In October this year, the Mamre Governance Board presented Kathryn Treston with its inaugural life membership in recognition of the many years of outstanding leadership and service in Mamre.

Congratulations Kathryn on this great achievement!

# What are you going to do over the Christmas/School holidays?

It is often said that 'the reality for families is, if they want a good life for their family member with disability, then, the family will need to plan for this'. A good way to begin to plan for a good life is to look in your own neighbourhood for opportunities for fun and connection.

**Neighbourhoods** offer opportunities where all people can gather together to enjoy music, festivities and parks to name a few. Even if you don't talk to anyone, just being out and about in places with others, feelings of isolation can decrease.

But sometimes a **hello** can turn into a conversation, and sometimes a **Conversation** can reveal a deeper connection, and a deeper **connection** can lead to friendship. But if we are not **present** then these connections simply cannot happen.



So check out the following Holiday Hit List and get out and about in your community and enjoy the holiday season with others.

The **Gallery of Modern Art** at South Bank has a lot of fun and interesting activities for kids 3-12 years over the holiday period.

**Chill Out** Program offers free or low cost activities for young people age 10-17. These activities commence the second week of January but bookings need to be made in mid December. For more information or a brochure outlining activities contact the Brisbane City Council on 34038888 or check their website at [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au)

A couple of free publications which come out every two months have loads of family fun ideas. Check out **Brisbane Child** and **Aussiekids**. These are available online [www.brisbaneschild.com.au](http://www.brisbaneschild.com.au) at most libraries or many shops catering to young families. We sometimes have copies in the foyer at Mamre offices.

Get a few neighbours together to host your own **neighbourhood Christmas party** in your local park. BYO everything and an activity for all of the kids to join in with.



The West End **Fire Festival** is held each full moon at Orleigh Park off Montague Road West End.

Visit the Kidspot website at [www.kidspot.com.au](http://www.kidspot.com.au) for lots of fun things to do both at home and out and about over the school holidays.



[www.ourbrisbane.com](http://www.ourbrisbane.com) is a great website full of information about events and activities over the school holiday period. You can click on a link to your own suburb or surrounding suburbs to find out what is on in your area over the holiday period.

*A lot of people ignore their **local rag**, but it is an excellent source of information about what is happening in your suburb. Give it to the kids and challenge them to find an activity for the whole family.*

There's some fun stuff happening in the heart of the city these days. Catch a train into town and check out the LIVE program at **King George Square**. LIVE is an innovative, socially inclusive and diverse program of arts and cultural events that includes music, festivals, cultural activities and community projects. For more information visit [www.brisbane.qld.gov.au](http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au) or phone **3403 8888**.

There's always something happening at **Southbank** check the website for 'what's on'. <http://www.ourbrisbane.com/south-bank/kids-events>.

The latest addition to the Parklands at South Bank is the new and improved Boat Pool with a specially designed ramp to provide much safer and **easier access for visitors in wheelchairs**. Regular wheelchairs and **pool wheelchairs can be hired** from the [South Bank Visitor Centre](#). Pool wheelchairs are purpose built and are available for **use in the** South Bank Boating Pond only. More info is available on **3867 2051**.

## Getting Around

TransLink (services within South-East Queensland) provides a guide to accessible services for Brisbane Transport buses, QR Citytrain and community transport services.

<http://www.translink.qld.gov.au/AccessibleTransport>



## PARKS

**There are a number of parks which have great facilities for all kids, including kids with disabilities:**

**Woolcock Park** at Red Hill (Off Waterworks Road) is very wheel chair friendly with walking track and trail, and low set tables and drinking fountains as well as sensory play equipment.

**Roma Street Parklands** and **Pelican Park** at Clontarf both have a wheel chair accessible swing.

**Kalinga Park** end of Park Avenue, Clayfield. This park has too many exciting features to mention, just go check it out!!!

**Pioneer Park All Abilities Playground** Glass House Mountain Rd Landsborough. This is a newly built park and apparently a wonderful place for kids to visit.

You can find out more about these parks at [www.ourbrisbane.com](http://www.ourbrisbane.com).

## Introducing S.T.A.R.S. Cont....

### Allyce's story

I am the mother of Allyce nearly 23 years of age. Six months before the end of her full term schooling I learned about Post School Funding and advised how extremely important it would be for Allyce to apply and be granted this recurrent funding by Disability Services. When we finally received the letter stating Allyce had been approved, we as a family were over the moon. I still have that letter it was like winning the lottery. That was 5 years ago. I thought the hard part was over until I then learnt we would now have to source a Service for Allyce. Being on the Sunshine Coast I soon realized our options were small and two out of the three organisations I visited were very old and run down and very overcrowded. Allyce spent 5 years at the Service we chose. There were ups and downs and gradually the staff started to change quite regularly and services were being cut. This was affecting us as what we wanted

for Allyce was not being delivered. I was approached by a couple of other dissatisfied parents and gradually learned about Mamre. I had no idea we could self fund. It was something completely new. We already had a Key Worker that we knew would be perfect and so our journey began. We are in the early stages and Allyce now attends STARS four days a week under the helpful guidance of Mamre. It is wonderfully busy program which Allyce enjoys to the fullest. Her communication and confidence grow by the day. It is a small group which suits Allyce perfectly. Our family are so thankful to have found this option for Allyce and will continue to support her in any way we can for a big bright future. A special thank you goes to our amazing Key Worker. She is one in a million. We are also grateful to Mamre, they have allowed us to have a vision and dream for the future for our beautiful daughter Allyce.

*Linda and Rex Cunningham*

### **BRODY'S STORY**

*We are the parents and carers of our 23 year old son Brody. We became dissatisfied with existing services in our area and also wanted and needed a tailored program for Brody's individual needs.*

*We investigated the possibilities for using our PSS Funding whilst staying within the DS guidelines. After many phone calls and conversations we were introduced to Mamre and the services they offered. We become aware of the benefits of self-managing funds through a host organization and realized this could make a huge difference to the quality of planning and support that Brody would receive.*

*For approximately 6 months now we have*

*been self managing Brody's funding. Our new venture is developing very well. We employ a very caring and capable Coordinator who with our input, tailors and delivers a very successful program. This includes voluntary work, paid work, and leisure activities.*

*With the new program we are enjoying the benefits of being empowered to provide a more fulfilling life for Brody.*

*We would encourage more families to look towards self managing as the benefits are truly amazing.*

*Kym and Dave Wright*

## James' Journey

James is now 28. After he finished his schooling at 18 years of age, we looked around for a Service provider that could extend James further and open up other possibilities and opportunities with regard to the next phase of his life. We did the whole thing. Touring around all of the providers on the Coast and eventually, settled on the one that was offering activities which seemed to be more appealing to the young people and where they were closer in age to one another. And so, for the next 8 years we were involved in this service.



Unfortunately, over the last 18 months there were many staff changes and with the continued movement from one area to another and the cur-tailing of quite a few of the outside activities, we were beginning to notice a distinct change in our son's behaviour. Although he seemed satisfied enough with his time there, he was becoming nonchalant and disinterested in the activities which were being offered, and harder for us to get him to do things at home.

We felt helpless as to what do we do now, knowing that there had to be something better out there for him, but not knowing which way to go. The last thing we wanted was to have an unhappy, unfulfilled young man.

So with a couple of other concerned parents, we set up an initial meeting and discovered that we were all feeling the same way. It was decided at this time, that we would approach a wonderful key worker that we all knew, especially the kids, to see if she was willing to work with them out on their own. This became the turning point in all our lives, when she said yes.

We now had to make this happen, but still had no idea which way to go. One of the parents making enquiries, came across MAMRE. It was exactly what we had been looking for. It just seemed too good to be true. After our initial contact and subsequent meetings with MAMRE, we began to find the answers to all our questions and the best way we should go about it..

For the past six months now, our young people have been working with Fiona who has definitely brought them out once again, and has them deeply involved in the community. They have a couple of paying jobs, ie. Distributing pamphlets for the local Real Estate Agent, volunteering at the local Coolum and Noosa Op Shops, as well as developing their 'market' garden of vegetables supplying family and friends, as well as cooking muffins and selling them at the Wednesday markets.

Fiona is developing their social skills and work ethics in the community as well as trying to keep on top of their literacy, numeracy, computer and money skills. The money they made in their jobs has helped to subsidize an overnight trip to Sea World where they swam with the dolphins. This was just an amazing thing to see them interacting with these beautiful animals.

They now have very fulfilling and rewarding days, and have gained the respect of the wider community with whom they are in contact with. We have been so fortunate in gaining the expertise of Fiona and with the guidance and administrative help from MAMRE it certainly has made our journey forward so much easier.

**Julianne & Frank Biffin**

## The Waiting Game

We're always waiting for something.  
 We can't wait till Friday,  
 we can't wait till our birthday,  
 we can't wait to grow up,  
 we can't wait to retire.  
 Maybe one day we'll get our act together.  
 Maybe one day we'll not be so slow,  
 so stupid, so angry,  
 so listless, so something ...

We can seem to do a lot of waiting –  
 a lingering that conjures the drumming  
 of fingers on the arm of the chair,  
 the impatience at the slowness  
 of the ticking of time, and the restlessness  
 of the unfinished symphony  
 of the moment.

Yet at the same time, our i-pods and  
 computers keep dumping emails by  
 the score upon us, and blackberries  
 and bluerays inject instant news and  
 entertainment into our already over-  
 loaded sensory systems, to anaesthetize  
 us to the sacredness of our  
 selves and our surrounds.

It's hard to wait, for it seems such a  
 waste of precious time: opportunities  
 when we could have started something,  
 finished something and improved  
 something.

Yet the porridge must be waited for  
 so it can be cooked through; the  
 trees must wait for the right moment  
 to burst forth in flower; the pregnant  
 woman must remember she can't  
 rush the miracle inside her. The  
 growing child cannot be born in three  
 months rather than nine, and mother  
 knows that she is called to be atten-

tive to and engaged with the miracle.

Truly human waiting entails neither  
 the drumming of fingers nor the  
 numbing out of the senses. Rather,  
 there is something holy, humbling,  
 sincere and sublime in genuine  
 waiting. It entails

not rushing in to too quickly solve a  
 situation

not giving in to the facile dismissive  
 comment

allowing ourselves to be empty of  
 pre-packaged answers

allowing ourselves to be present to  
 what is, and refusing to demand  
 that reality should be otherwise

being aware of the see-sawing between  
 wanting to fight and wanting  
 to flee, yet giving into neither  
 being prepared to let our soul-eyes  
 see new possibilities we haven't  
 even begun to imagine.

This form of holy human waiting  
 could be what the pregnant teen  
 Mary of Nazareth might have  
 experienced all those years ago,  
 when she said yes to the unknown,  
 the unformed, and the as yet unrecog-  
 nized. When we also find our-  
 selves in the midst of the unknown,  
 the unformed and as yet unrecog-  
 nized, and let holy human waiting  
 take place within us, then the feast  
 of Christmas may well  
 be just around the  
 corner.

**Patrick Oliver**

