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Generous response as fire crisis continues

Jan Down

Prayers, practical help and pastoral care are flowing through Gippsland, as the fire crisis continues.

At the time of writing, five lives have been lost in the region, hundreds of houses and farms have been destroyed, and millions of birds and animals have died.

Bishop Richard Treloar, in a pastoral letter to the Diocese on 5 January, wrote, "Our hearts and hands go out to the people of the eastern region in your grief and loss, as you seek to come to terms with the trauma you have faced and the devastation caused to lives and livelihoods, to property, stock, towns, and to the creation itself."

Bishop Richard paid tribute to the work of emergency services, the CFA and all who have worked to keep people safe, as well as clergy and lay people responding to needs since the fires. He committed the Diocese to a sustained relief effort.

The generosity of people from across the state and well beyond has been tremendous. Enough goods have been received, clergy are saying, and the real need now is for funds to help people rebuild their lives.

The Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) emergency chaplains have been on hand at relief centres to listen to people and assist them in finding the help they need.

Churches have held prayer services and vigils (see p. 5). The Rev'd Jude Benton held a service of prayer and lament

on the beach at Mallacoota a few days after the fire there (reported by eternitynews.com.au on 6 January). The Ven Brenda Burney, rector at Bairnsdale and Archdeacon of the Eastern Region, offered a time of prayer at the church on the evening of New Year's Day, which over 50 people attended, despite only short notice via social media. Many gathered for a vigil at St Paul's Cathedral in Sale, and the people of Maffra gathered for a time of prayer (see p. 5).

Before the worst of the fires, many thousands of people evacuated from east Gippsland. The Rev'd Thelma Langshaw, her two daughters and many townspeople were airlifted out of Omeo. People from Lake Tyers beach, including the Rev'd Phyllis Andy, were evacuated, and two-thirds of the Lake Tyers Trust population also left. About 25,000 people left Lakes Entrance and Metung, which were inundated by smoke. The core Lakes Entrance congregation stayed, responding to many local needs. Philip Muston, rector at Lakes Entrance, did chaplaincy shifts at the relief centre and at the command centre in Bairnsdale.



Photo: Andy Benton

Bishop Richard with the Rev'd Jude Benton during his visit to Mallacoota

At Mallacoota, Jude and her husband, Andy, decided to stay. They and their cat spent the night before the fire in a boat – one of about 35 – out on the lake.

One parishioner, Fred Becker, died in the town of Genoa. Jude said the Becker family was the backbone of both the Genoa congregation and community.

Dozens of houses were destroyed in Mallacoota, but the church buildings there and in Cann River were safe.

Speaking to TGA only a week after the fire there, Jude was very concerned for her scattered flock, three-quarters of whom were displaced and families separated. She particularly wanted to thank those clergy who were offering the pastoral care she couldn't, with the road still closed and communications limited. Jude was very thankful to all the people who sent messages of

prayers and support.

A much appreciated boost to morale came when Bishop Richard Treloar dropped in (quite literally, by RAAF Spartan aircraft, pictured) to see Jude and Andy and retired priest Roger Jackman. Bishop Richard commented, "I am so grateful to the RAAF for making it possible to spend some time with Jude and her team in Mallacoota. There were some confronting scenes, and it was inspiring to speak with locals and volunteers from elsewhere who had responded to the emergency with great courage, resilience and generosity of spirit. Jude, Andy, Roger and so many of our clergy and people in the east and right across the Diocese are doing an amazing job in challenging conditions, and will need our support for the long road ahead."

In Buchan, the rector, Philip Kissick, who was already on

sick leave at the time, had been previously evacuated along with most of the people there. Nineteen houses were lost at Sarsfield and at least 24 at Buchan. Two of the houses destroyed there, close to Bairnsdale, belonged to Bairnsdale parishioners.

Retired priests Laurie Baker (former rector of Tambo parish) and Jim Reeves have been providing pastoral care and locum ministry in Philip's absence since the fires, and Bishop Richard visited these areas with Laurie and his wife Heather after morning services in Metung and Lakes Entrance on 12 January.

In Orbost, the Rev'd Bevil and Barbara Lunson spent a night sitting on their verandah, hoses in hands, watching out for flying embers.

A relief centre was set up at Orbost in the Anglican church hall. "We're here nine to five each day," Bevil said. "Truckload after truckload" of water and food had been arriving, he reported, and was being distributed.

Bairnsdale, being the safest, nearest town to the fires, has had the main relief centre. Brenda has been billeting VCC emergency chaplains, managing the distribution of donated goods, doing shifts at the relief centre and generally responding to needs.

People cope less and less with an ongoing crisis, Brenda said, because it is re-traumatising. She is grateful to Samaritan's Purse, who will provide a Hope in Crisis seminar, and has had a team there helping to clean up properties after the fires. Anglican clergy have been involved in planning for and leading ecumenical services, providing important opportunities for communities to come together, share stories, reflect and be strengthened in hope.

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Together we stand

Thank you to readers of TGA who have so generously and readily supported the Diocese in seeking to respond to the bushfires that ravaged east Gippsland on the cusp of this new year.

Your prayers have sustained us, your donations have helped those most directly affected to access much-needed pastoral care, and your partnership with us has enabled our faith-communities in the thick of the crisis to continue doing what they do best: being a visible focus of divine compassion, offering physical spaces and liturgical structure for gathering and processing grief, loss and anxiety, and equipping God's people for their ministry as bearers of light and hope where there is darkness and despair.

In times of crisis we are reminded of the strength to be found in standing together. Partnerships that we can sometimes take for granted are foregrounded, and our differences recede in the face of a common and pressing purpose.

We have seen the way that emergency services, government and non-government agencies, community groups, and our Australian Defence Forces have come together to meet the varying needs of so many – not only here in

Gippsland but right around the country.

Churches too have been working together within and between Christian denominations in a spirit of collaboration and the open sharing of human and other resources, alongside those of other religious traditions.

On the Australia Day weekend, notwithstanding tragic losses to life and the devastation of property and habitat across the ecosystem, some of those characteristics often associated with Australian culture and values were acknowledged as contributing to the shared relief effort.

Such reflections must also take proper account of the longstanding pre-existent culture and venerable spirituality of our First Nation peoples, and of the impact of natural disasters and the way they are collectively processed on Indigenous communities, cognisant of the unique, evolving and abiding relationship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples enjoyed with the land, the waters, and the skies, as primary custodians.

Doing so within a Judeo-Christian context, we are recalled to our own primordial partnership with creation, and asked to consider what its pain and scarring from these fires may have to teach us.



Bishop Richard Treloar

As we emerge from the great, albeit in our setting rather solemnly freighted, seasons of Christmas and Epiphany, we have been comforted by the theme of divine solidarity in the Word made flesh – God's partnership with us in the one revealed as the light of the nations, in whose belovedness by grace we share.

Such is the theme of a benediction written on a very difficult New Year's Day by our Uniting Church colleague, Rev Jennie Gordon. As we continue to work with our ecumenical partners – locally and at the level of peak bodies – towards sustaining effective ministry in remote bushfire affected areas, Jennie's poetry seems especially apposite.

Some of you will have seen it elsewhere, though many of our readers will not. Whether new or familiar, and with her blessing, I share it with you, echoing the gratitude – indeed the beatitude – it conveys.

+RM

blessed are you –
East Gippsland

*blessed are you
who walk the scorching
beaches
and shelter in the ocean
brushing burning embers
God beside you*

*blessed are you
who weep with grief
and sorrow
and bear an ashen image
of a life of green and growing
God beside you*

*blessed are you
who face the firestorm's fury
and volunteer for danger
companions in the battle
God beside you*

*blessed are you
who work to bring together
the rallied deeds of angels
and shape a place of respite
God beside you*

*blessed are you
who set a bowl of water
in the wilderness of burning
to care for little creatures
God beside you*

*blessed are you
who wait with calm and
coping
engage in patient listening
approach with wine and
welcome
cook for crowds of strangers
clothe and house your
neighbours
pray for rest and rainfall
God beside you*

Jennie Gordon,
1 January 2020

Prayer Diary: around the parishes

“That we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith...” (ROMANS 1:12)

AVON – EASTERN REGION

Holy Trinity, Stratford
All Saints, Briagolong
St Mary, Munro
Priest-in-Charge:
The Rev'd David Perryman

This mission-focused, three-centred parish is located in east Gippsland. The parish is Christ-centred, seeking to make Jesus known in our local communities. We currently have traditional worship services with an all-age worship family service once a month. We have regular Bible studies, mainly music and the Family Fun Fair in May. Please pray for us as we continue to grow community relationships, share the

gospel and seek to engage all ages in the parish.

BAIRNSDALE – EASTERN REGION

St John's, Bairnsdale
Rector: The Ven Brenda Burney

We give thanks for the life and witness of our parish; for our community; for the possibilities and challenges that lie ahead; for our team of faithful, hard-working parishioners as they undertake their ministries and mission; for the blessing of Johnno's Outreach Centre and Men's Shed which allow us to help those in need in our community.

Please pray for us as we seek to develop the ministries and mission identified at our parish visioning sessions last year: Praise and Prayer Evening Worship; Ministry to the homeless/ needy; healing prayer; Alpha Courses; children's and youth ministry; and carpet bowls. We pray for those who will lead those ministries and that we will listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit as we discern what shape those ministries will take.

BASS-PHILLIP ISLAND – SOUTHERN REGION

St Paul's, Bass
St Phillip's, Cowes

St Augustine's, San Remo
Rector: The Rev'd Jo White

The parish has worked hard to create its mission statement. Please pray that it will guide our decision making and enhance our life together. We give thanks that we are blessed with a fine, prominent position in the main street of Cowes. This provides many opportunities for groups like Red Frogs, Theos and Scripture Union to minister to locals and visitors. We give thanks for the volunteers who open the Mary Talbot Room five days a week and those who help with fundraising barbeques and Devonshire teas, parish fete and regular second-hand book sales. We plan to begin small groups this year so pray for this to grow gently and with God's leading.

Street art project brings biblical scenes to life



Ian Campbell, Anglican Diocese of Bendigo

Three new murals now hang from the walls of the church and hall at St James' Tongala, with a formal opening and blessing led by Bishop Matt Brain in mid-October.

The artworks are amongst 50 murals around the town of Tongala, painted by local Murray Ross with the support of the Lions Club through the project 'Tongala Street Art'.

The murals depict well known biblical scenes including Moses parting the waters, Jesus walking on water and a montage of four scenes of Noah's Ark.

Bishop Matt said he was blown away by the commitment and skill of the artists and the Tongala community. "The heart of

our church belongs with local congregations, and it is clear that this town and congregation has great humour and great gifts to share," he said. "My hope for all our churches both large and small is that they are finding ways to support and uplift the local community they are in, and this is a wonderful example of that."

The murals are well worth a visit if you are ever in Tongala, and if you look closely you might find a few oddities including a shark, an elephant rabbit and classic Aussie dunny! As for the dunny – Bishop Matt is in full support. "Life is too serious as it is. It is great to be able to see the lighter side of life," he said.

Courtesy www.bendigoanglican.org.au

Community building at Summerplay in Sale

Nikolai Blaskow

Who will ever forget the start of summer 2020? The pall of it has cast a long shadow: so much destruction, human lives lost and mourned – livelihoods decimated. Thick smoke covered most of the eastern seaboard and, when roads were temporarily opened, hundreds of kilometres of dangerously burnt-out trees smouldered.

Not surprisingly, there were cancellations for the Sale Summerplay in January, an InterPlay Australia event facilitated by Phil Porter (USA) and Trish Watts (Co-founder Australia). But despite the hardships and the road closures, 28 of the 35 people expected made it to a Gippsland on fire – and it was a blessing that, at the start of the event, rain fell and cleared the air.

The highlight was when 20 people surrounded a healthy green tree in nearby Victoria Park and sang on behalf of all who had suffered, and those who died. The song was *Ashes and Smoke*, which Linda Allen had written after the catastrophe of 9/11.



Photo: Christine Morris

It was a song of regeneration: "We have been burnt ... But we will rise higher and higher on the wings of compassion, justice and hope."

So what is InterPlay?

Trying to explain it is a bit like poor Billy Elliott explaining what dance meant to him. It wasn't clear until one of the panel from the Royal Ballet asked him that one last question: 'What does it feel like when you are dancing?'

His answer encapsulates it all:

Don't know. Sort of feels good. It's sort of stiff and that, but once I get goin', then, I, like forget everythin'. And ... sort of disappear. Sort of disappear ... I'm just there, flyin' ... like a bird. Like electricity.

Eight of our 28 participants graduated from the Life Practice Program, which

ran last year. The program features, among many other practices, dancing on behalf of, big body stories, dance with witness, contact dances, follow the leader, eight body wisdom tools and group toning/singing. And, like a scarlet thread running through it all: a profound sense of fun and play.

And from such practices arises a great strength.

Visualise Billy Elliott's dramatic leap at the start of the Royal Ballet's *Swan Lake*: passionate, powerful, the triumph of years of practice and the community who helped him get there.

InterPlay is not the Royal Ballet. But in more than 20 years it is the most powerful community-building and life-changing practice I have witnessed.

A single ember can spread bushfires as far as 40km.

Burning embers from bushfires can travel up to 40km, starting new fires in seconds, destroying homes and making escape impossible. If the Fire Danger Rating is ever extreme or above, don't hesitate. Leave early.

How well do you know fire?

Plan. Act. Survive. Go to [emergency.vic.gov.au](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)

Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne

VICTORIA
State Government

Minimising the trauma of bushfire

Kerry Howard
PsychNEXUS

Australia is in a state of crisis, arguably in the middle of the worst natural disaster experiences in our recorded history. Trauma prevention strategist and psychologist Kerry Howard is keen to ensure that communities are supported during these days of collective trauma. As a survivor of the 2003 Canberra firestorm, Ms Howard understands the emotions and devastation that many Australians are currently experiencing. Ms Howard is committed to providing skills and resources that can minimise the impact of extreme emotional experiences on individuals and communities.

“Australia is built on a foundation of resilience – we see ourselves as ‘tough’. Getting support after facing a disaster should not be seen as a sign of weakness, it is actually an indicator of strength. We often don’t work through our negative feelings about the experience, as they happen. Often it feels easier to avoid how we are feeling. However, the Aussie approach of ‘She’ll be right, mate!’ can often be more harmful, as avoidance is one of the biggest predictors to developing longer term emotional problems,” Ms Howard said.

When things get overwhelming, it can be helpful to get professional help. However, by the time we become aware of the problem

and seek help, our brains have often already settled into a pattern of negative thinking that can take some time to resolve.

“Prevention is always better than cure, so there are some simple ways that we can minimise the impact of our traumatic experience as it is happening.

Understanding these simple things may ensure that our communities are not overwhelmed in their efforts to recover,” Ms Howard said.

In order to minimise the impact, Ms Howard has developed a system that we can all use. She recommends that we encourage each other to be RAW:

Reality check

You are not alone in this experience and the situation is unprecedented. Ensure you seek advice and take action to maintain your safety. Recognise that any decision you make is the best one that you could have made in the moment.

Awareness

Try to notice if you are talking excessively about your experiences, or not talking about them at all. Everyone processes things differently, and the extreme responses are the ones to be aware of as they are often early indicators of a developing problem.



Photo: Chris Mulherin

The Rev'd Jude Benton held post-fire prayers on the beach in Mallacoota

Walk ‘n’ talk

It is important to help our brains to process trauma to talk openly with each other about our experience but try to focus on the positives. Walking facilitates bilateral stimulation, which is scientifically proven to reduce the impact of the traumatic experience. Allowing the emotions to come up as we walk helps to reduce the impact of the traumatic event.

“If we can apply the RAW process, it may help to eliminate any longer term psychological impacts that can result from traumatic experience. We know that our brains start to consolidate information within the first six hours after a traumatic event, so it’s important to Walk ‘n’ Talk ASAP. The earlier we start using these tools, the better impact we have in the longer term,” Ms Howard said.

There are other things to consider over the coming weeks to ensure that our reaction has been actually processed normally – the main one is sleep. It is quite common to have trouble falling asleep due to excessive thinking about the incident, or waking around 3 am with your mind racing and being unable to fall back to sleep. It is also common to dream about the event. This should settle down in a couple of days, especially if you have implemented the RAW process. However, if it is not settling, it can help to write down the things that you keep thinking about – it gives our brain a reality check about our approach.

Many of the experiences outlined are common responses to any traumatic

experience. However, if they persist you should consult your GP or reach out to a counselling or psychological

service, such as Rural Help, for support.

“By supporting members of the community to take a more proactive approach to their own mental health, by utilising RAW and encouraging others to do the same, we might just be able to prevent the worst natural disaster in our history becoming the biggest burden on our already overwhelmed health system in the future,” Ms Howard said.

Kerry Howard is the founder of PsychNEXUS – Helping You Feel Better.

She leads a team of experts in the prevention and early intervention of psychological injury.

Listening to help healing after disaster

Cathrine Muston
Anglicare Community Development Officer

How do we respond to the disaster that continues to unfold around us? The helplessness that we feel as we hear of and read the stories of devastation from this summer’s fires can unbalance and leave us with an overwhelming sense of despair. And of course there is the extreme grief and loss that many are experiencing and will continue to experience as they rebuild their homes, businesses and communities. How do we recover from this and what role can our parishes and Anglicare play?

The important thing we can do at this time – every one of us – is to listen. Something learnt from the Black Saturday fires is that people process their experience through telling their story, by exploring the why, what and how of events and their aftermath. We need to provide the space and time for people to tell their stories and to respond to them with sensitivity and reassurance – allowing people to cry or not cry as they need.

In times of disaster and trauma, our brains need to make some sense of what has happened. The best thing that the listener can do is to acknowledge the

loss and validate what the person has experienced. Even those who were nowhere near the fires but have been overwhelmed by the media coverage may need to tell their story. We need to be able to reassure people that things will be ok, and that what has been experienced was significant. In particular, it is important to validate the feelings of children, who may be experiencing feelings that they do not understand, and to reassure them that they are safe. Careful listening to one another’s stories can help us all as we recover from this season of loss and disaster. Providing a space for a cuppa and chat in our homes and churches can provide opportunity for these stories to be told.

Anglicare Victoria will be looking for ways in which we can further partner with parishes to support them at this time in order to strengthen community and support recovery.

For further information and resources, you might find the following helpful:

<https://whatsyourgrief.com>
www.phoenixaustralia.org/recovery/helping-children-and-teens
or call Lifeline (13 11 14)



Be a part of supporting the Aboriginal Ministry Fund

The AMF exists to resource employment of Aboriginal people in ministry; training of Aboriginal people for ministry; development of Aboriginal ministry in the community; the planting of Aboriginal churches; education of the Diocese about Aboriginal issues.

Be a part of achieving these aims.

Contact the Diocese of Gippsland
453 Raymond Street, Sale, Victoria
PO Box 928, Sale, 3853
Telephone 03 5144 2044
Fax 03 5144 7183
Email registrar@gippsanglican.org.au

BAIRNSDALE



Photo: Brenda Burney

Alison Goetz

The weeks leading up to the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus saw the traditional services and observances at St John's Bairnsdale. Each held its own promise and joy but the ominous shadow of bushfires hovered in the background.

After Christmas Day, the tension generated by the increasing temperatures and gusty winds was building. Fires had been burning for months and on the Sunday before New Year we were told by emergency services that everyone in east Gippsland

should leave. What? Surely Bairnsdale is safe? Perhaps not.

On New Year's Eve, the feeling of dread became terror and the roller coaster of emotions intensified. The terror of night skies glowing red and daylight revealing massive smoke plumes all too close. The horror of the realisation that this could go on for months. The fear for the firefighters and those whose homes were in the path of raging infernos. The almost inconceivable thought that even the unlikely event of 10 inches of rain might not be enough to quench the fires.

MAFFRA

Rev'd Janet Wallis

On 3 January, the people of Maffra gathered for a time of prayer for all affected by fires in our district. People of each denomination in town attended, as well as a couple of evacuees staying with friends. Our liturgy had been produced as an ecumenical service following the 2009 fires in Gippsland, and adapted for the evening.

We reflected on the trauma of fire and its aftermath on people, livestock, wildlife and community. People were invited to write their own prayers and

place them in water, because water puts out fire, as a way of offering them to God.

At the centre of the church were various materials of different colours: blue representing water on top of the blackened landscape, brown for the exposed soils, a mottled green for hope of restoration emerging from the scarred earth, and green for growth, leading to the Paschal Candle as a sign of the hope of resurrection.

Our prayers were sincere and focused. We thank God that some rain has fallen, and we continue to pray for more.



Hours were spent anxiously monitoring Vic Emergency information and weather forecasts. There was little comfort in knowing that we are not alone, that fires were burning out of control in five states. More time was spent in fervent prayer for mercy and protection.

We witnessed the grief of loss and hardship. And we experienced the helplessness and frustration of being safe but not knowing what to do or how to help those affected or in harm's way.

Relief efforts sprang into action and the community rallied around the evacuated and each other. Donations came flooding in. The Victorian Council of Churches Emergency Ministry teams arrived and local ministers joined them to spend long hours with evacuees and the bereaved.

After another horror day and night on New Year's Eve, our newly appointed Archdeacon, the Ven Brenda Burney, called an ecumenical prayer meeting for New Year's Day with a hasty text message to many of her



Photo: Judi Hogan

flock with the instruction to "pass it on". Many attended and drew enormous comfort from a service of prayer and readings from Lamentations and the Gospel of St Matthew, a service that Brenda had originally put together in the aftermath of the Black Saturday fires in 2009. And lament and pray we did, while placing rose petals in a bowl of water and red paper hearts in prayer at the foot of a cross. There were many hugs, and tears flowed freely. There was the awe of witnessing the steadfast faith of those who had lost their homes, their gratitude for their lives and

their sure and certain hope that God will provide.

Epiphany morning was blessedly cool and raining. Not hard, but consistently. At church, we were blessed with the unexpected but welcome presence of Bishop Richard with a message of love, prayer and support. At his side was our exhausted rector who had spent too many hours in her chaplaincy role at the emergency relief centre in Bairnsdale since New Year's Day but who still had energy for laughter and children's stories, tears and hugs for the bereaved and the troubled, and to baptise an evacuee whose home is still in danger.

Later in the day, I was brought to tears again by the sight of a convoy of brave truckers and their escort carrying hay, stockfeed and heavy machinery to fire-ravaged Buchan and beyond. And it rained on into late Monday. Prayers answered.

At the time of writing, another spike day is imminent. Again, many will evacuate, emergency service workers will gather their strength for another fight and we will prepare. And pray.

SALE



Photo: Richard Treloar

Cynthia Grove

On 5 January, about 60 people gathered at St Paul's Cathedral in Sale to share grief and prayers for all those affected by bushfire in east Gippsland and across Australia. We came from different denominations and faith traditions; that alone was a joy to be able to share with others, even in this time of sorrow.

As we started the vigil, Jenny Batten sang Linda Allen's *Ashes and Smoke* very movingly.

Then there were readings, and reflections from, first, the Rev'd Rowena Harris, about the conditions at Mallacoota, read by the Rev'd Sue Stott (both of the Uniting Church). In the second reflection, Bishop Richard spoke with great

empathy and insight. Prayers, and a poem by Rev Jennie Gordon of the Uniting Church (see p. 2) were read. Holding the words from the prayers in our hearts we were invited to approach the altar and place petals in a bowl of water (representing tears).

During the vigil the recently formed Threshold Choir sang twice for us, easing the burden of grief with their music, *When the Weight of the World* and *Metta Sutta*. We all sang Shirley Erena Murray's *Memorial Hymn for Australian People in the Aftermath of the Bushfires 2009* to the tune of *Now Thank We All Our God*.

As we left, we were invited to take pieces of rosemary and place them on maps of Australia and Victoria.

BUNYIP

Tim Green

Since the disastrous fires in March last year that devastated the Tonimbuk community, the congregation at St Thomas has been working behind the scenes with donations of food and finances. Recently, two small oak tree seedlings were donated by the people of Tonimbuk in thanks for the support given by the church community. They have been planted on the nature strip outside the church grounds. They were planted by Louise Hunter, a resident of Tonimbuk and a member of the congregation.

In ecosystems, little things mean a lot

Jocelyn Suiter

Often in life it's the little things that mean a lot. And that's the case when it comes to the hundreds of billions of insects feared dead in the bushfires that have hit.

The insects, which don't appear among the images coming out of fire-stricken areas, sustain many of the fluffy native animals that tug at our heartstrings. The Bogong moth, already in decline in the High Country, is the main food source for

the endangered mountain pygmy possum.

Australian National University Professor David Lindenmayer says the fires have consumed large numbers of insects, which will have a great impact on the forests of east Gippsland and their regeneration. This is a sombre start to the United Nations' International Year of Plant Health.

"Insects play important roles in pollinating trees, dispersal of seeds, breaking down waste like leaf litter. They are much more abundant

in the wetter weather. It is hard to say if they will regenerate to previous numbers after these fires," he said.

Professor Lindenmayer, from the Fenner School of Environment and Society, says the main impact on the ecology is not the severity of the current fires, which have swept through several million hectares in Victoria and NSW, but the rate of occurrence of fires.

In east Gippsland, many areas hit by this summer's fires were also burnt in the previous decade but the forests actually need about 100 years between fires to regenerate, Professor Lindenmayer said.

"Our ecological systems are not geared to deal with frequent, high-intensity fires. Our systems may collapse – it's a real worry," he said.

The issue of climate change is, of course, the elephant in the room. While many of our politicians say it is not the right time to discuss global warming, Professor Lindenmayer forcefully disagreed.

"This is the time people are directly affected. It's pretty



Photo: Toby Hudson

The 'green grocer' cicada (*Cyclochila australasiae*) is a food source for insect-eaters in east Gippsland

clear. The science is clear. There are higher temperatures and less rainfall. The climate and weather are key drivers of bushfires.

"Gippsland has seen a 25 per cent reduction in rainfall over the past 20 years and that puts a strain on farmers as well."

Environmental stewardship, which relates to responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices, is a belief that can be linked to Genesis in the Bible where humanity was given the task of looking after the Earth. The fifth mark of Anglican mission urges us to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the Earth.

In simple terms, all humans are responsible for taking care of the world. It's a doctrine, Professor Lindenmayer says, that has a lot of merit.

"Everyone should be responsible for the custodianship of the Earth. In Australia, we have so many species unique to our continent, not only koalas, we should all have global stewardship roles.

"It's applicable to forests and farmland. Few farmers want to degrade their land."

When the issue of climate change seems too big for an individual to address, we should think of ourselves as being like the insects in the forest contributing to a sustainable ecology, Professor Lindenmayer said.

Memorable moments at Wonthaggi crib service



Vivienne McInerney

Around 4 pm last Christmas Eve, as the congregation started to arrive at St Georges Wonthaggi, they were invited to don the robes of Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds and wise men. Toy animals stood around and at the right time a swathed doll was laid in the manger.

Our locum priest, the Rev'd Anne Perryman, narrated the Christmas story, and the actors mimed. There had been no rehearsal.

We sang carols throughout, and then the unexpected happened: to our amusement, the baby in the manger was abducted by a tiny tot. The baby was then gently retrieved.

We watched a short video, *Teach Your Children to Care*, and finished with Holy Communion and blessings. Late afternoon tea was a chocolate cake (with a candle for Jesus), fairy bread and lemonade.

The message from the service was 'Take Jesus with you'. One little girl certainly took that to heart.

All things Russian at the Abbey

Susan Fordham

In late November, the Abbey at Raymond Island hosted the long-awaited 'Russian History with a Twist', hosted and presented by June Treadwell.

June is a well-regarded presenter of all things historical at Bairnsdale U3A so it was bound to be successful.

The Friday night session began with an outline of early Russian history, the 'choice' of Christianity to support the Russian state and the development of church and state as a mechanism for the control of the Russian people.

The dinner that followed was an example of Ian Pearson at his finest. The Abbey chef produced roasted half chickens in a red wine jus with seasonal vegetables, and sticky date pudding drizzled with a caramel butterscotch sauce.

The Saturday sessions began with looking at how

Peter the Great transformed Russia from a backwater to a modern (for the times) international player. He was a truly remarkable if bloodthirsty character.

June had invited Leo Wimmer – artist, art restorer and icon writer – to present a session on Russian iconography and the process for selecting the right timber and preparing it for the icon. Those who know Leo, a member of Sale's cathedral church, realise that

he is a very engaging presenter. The audience was mesmerised by the torrent of fascinating information and wished that the session could have gone on for far longer than it had.

The final session focused on Catherine the Great, another talented and clever national leader



Photo: Edie Ashley

June Treadwell

who did much to consolidate the territory and organisation of the Russian empire while establishing the arts and culture on a firm footing.

In all, 'Russian History with a Twist' was extraordinarily successful and everyone is waiting for the next of June's inspired presentations.

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Whisky and welcome company at Bass–Phillip Christmas

Rev'd Jo White

As rector, I was immensely proud of our parish as I looked around at how happy we all were in each other's company at the Bass–Phillip Island Parish Christmas Dinner in December. The food was excellent. The speaker was entertaining and the addition of a paid dishwasher was a welcome inclusion. The dinner was a great success and made a considerable contribution to parish finances.

We have gathered as a parish on a number of occasions this year: Shrove Tuesday pancakes at St Augustine's, lunch with Bishop Richard at the Bass Hotel, the combined service for the AGM, the

parish fete, Men's Dinners, as well as this Parish Christmas Dinner. It was good to see many people from across the parish working side by side at the Moto GP breakfasts in October and the parish fete in November.

The Christmas dinner was ably coordinated by Ralph and Pauleen Leditschke. The menu was traditional and provided everyone with a delicious meal and a wonderful occasion of fellowship and festive gathering. We started with a variety of breads and dips, followed by a main course of roast turkey thighs and roast pork, roast potatoes, steamed asparagus and glazed carrots, gravy and apple sauce. Dessert was a crowd favourite: plum

pudding and custard or, for those who preferred it, fresh fruit salad and cream.

We literally sang for our supper. Ken White accompanied our song on the Ahlborn organ. We enjoyed a rendition of *The Holly and the Ivy*, a favourite of Jenny Dawson from St Augustine's, reminding her of Christmases in the UK. We also sang all the verses of *Good King Wenceslas*, *Silent Night* and *Deck the Halls*.

Our after-dinner speaker was Mr Julian White, co-owner of Whisky & Alement Melbourne, world-renowned whisky expert and international whisky judge. Julian brought with him three whiskies for us to try – two from Australia and one 10-year-old Scotch



Photo: Les Ridge

Guest speaker Julian White and Rev'd Jo White

whisky. Even non-whisky drinkers were entertained with interesting facts, including the definition of a cask and a barrel and what makes a whisky a Bourbon or a Scotch. (For those who don't know, a barrel is a specific size of cask, with a volume of 200 litres, and 'cask' is the name of the coopered containers used to mature whisky.) One of the Australian whiskies we sampled was matured in Australian wine casks.

A Bourbon whisky can only be called Bourbon if it is made from 51% corn and matured in American oak casks in America. Similarly, a Scotch can only be so-called if it has been distilled and matured in oak casks in Scotland.

We were packed into the parish hall: 84 people in all. Perhaps it was a little squeezy, but this reflects the popularity of the event. A definite fixture on the parish calendar.

Songs, stories and skits at Stratford Community Carols

Gail Wager

After much planning by a dedicated organising committee, led by the Rev'd Dave Perryman, the Stratford Community Carols by Candlelight took place on 15 December. Holy Trinity Anglican Church hosted the event, which attracted well over 300 people, including many local families. The jumping castle, sausage sizzle provided by Stratford Lions and fairy floss were all free pre-carols activities. Local volunteers, dressed as

characters from the Christmas story, circulated in the crowd and later enacted the reading of the Christmas story.

When the audience had programs and battery candles, the carols began, ably compered by Deb Bye from the Stratford Uniting Church, supported by the Sale City Band and the Stratford Singers. Students from Stratford Primary School and St Patrick's Primary School entertained with Christmas songs. School Chaplain Steve Postlethwaite conveyed the true meaning of Christmas with an entertaining skit.

Fr Peter Bickley, from St Patrick's Catholic Church, rounded off the evening with a traditional Christmas blessing. A retiring offering raised a generous donation for local charity Annie's Cottage. The event was fortunate to have a pleasant summer evening, and thankfully the wind died down for the carols!

The organisers are grateful for the sponsorship of Wellington Shire Council and Marathon Electrical, and the support of the Lions Club of Stratford, without which the event would not have been so successful.



Children's art for Yarram's Christmas trees

Rev'd Brian Norris

Early on 6 December, members of the Anglican Parish of Yarram and friends placed 90 small wooden Christmas trees in Commercial Road, Yarram.

The Yarram Men's Shed cut the trees from material gifted by Bunnings of Sale. In 2019, the main sponsor was Cooper's Hardware, Yarram, who provided the paint. The trees usually last for three to four years before needing replacement.

The trees were decorated by schools in the Yarram district during November. Mr Hartmeier, the driving force behind the project, said that it was great

having the schools and the parish involved on this special Christmas project together. For this fifth year of the Christmas Tree Trail, he expressed the hope that the trees would remind everyone of the true meaning of Christmas.

The idea for the project came after a visit by Mr Hartmeier to Budapest six years ago, where he saw Christmas trees decorated by children in the main shopping precinct of the city. "When you look at the project overall, more than 200 people helped to make the Christmas Tree Trail happen, involving practically the entire community of Yarram," said Mr Hartmeier.

Extravaganza in Orbost

About 130 people joined in for an evening of pre-Christmas fun, food and friendship at St James' Orbost Theatrical Extravaganza in November. The Nowa Nowa Men's Choir (pictured) are part of the event every year.



Photo: Barbara Lunson

New national director for SIM Australia



Archdeacon Clem Watts

Malcolm Watts has been appointed as the new national director for SIM (Serving in Mission) Australia. He was commissioned for the task on 29 November 2019, to act as both CEO and pastor for people and the organisation. SIM Australia has over 125 missionaries serving in 29 countries across the world as part of SIM International.

Malcolm's call to missionary service came

when he was a teenager at the Anglican church in Warragul, where his father was the minister. A visiting CMS missionary, Dr Tim Linton from Nepal, was speaking about his work as a medical doctor in Nepal. Dr Linton just happened to mention that a lot of his time was taken up with administration and accounting responsibilities. The Lord used that comment to touch Malcolm's heart as he said to himself, "I could do that."

After graduating from St Paul's Anglican Grammar School in 1987, Malcolm trained as an accountant and became a Certified Practising Accountant. He attended the Bible College of Victoria for three years and it was there that he met his wife, Jenny, who also believed that God was calling her to be a missionary in Africa. After their marriage in 1998, they offered themselves to SIM for missionary service. They left Australia the following year for Paris to study French, the language they would need in Burkina Faso.

Malcolm and Jenny, along with their two daughters, Erinn and Alicia, served with SIM in Burkina Faso, West Africa, for 15 years. They returned to Australia in 2015 and settled in Sydney, where Malcolm served as the national finance director for SIM Australia. He is based at the national office for SIM in Penshurst, NSW.

History comes alive at Bunyip Lectures

Rev'd Ken Parker

Jim Connelly attracted a good crowd at our ninth Bunyip Lecture on 8 December, when he told wonderful stories of growing up at Garfield in the 1930s and 40s and of his involvement in St Mary's Church. As this venerable priest shared from his heart, the Garfield of his childhood came alive for his audience. It was an absolute treat!

Our next Bunyip Lecture will build on this experience. Joy Cullen from the Mornington Historical Society will tell us something of the remarkable life of the Rev'd George Cox, who began ministry with Gippsland Forest Mission, serving at Thorpdale and Neerim South as a lay reader. In January 1898, severe bushfires threatened Thorpdale. The Australasian newspaper told of "Rev. G. Cox ... who did such splendid rescue work" and *The Argus* depicted "The Church of England

clergyman, Mr. Cox, a typical bush parson [who] had to be led exhausted from many a gallant struggle, and is now almost blind." After ordination, Cox served at Mirboo North and Yarram.

During the First World War, Cox served in the army, playing a leading role in the development of a venereal disease hospital for soldiers at Langwarrin. Following the war, he settled with his family at Mornington, where he lived the rest of his life, dying in 1946. He never lost his love for Gippsland.

According to Dr Connelly, much of what we know of the early Anglican ministry in Gippsland is due to Cox's love of this land and his careful recording of the history of the pioneering church.

Joy Cullen has recently published a fine little book on George Cox. Come and hear her speak about *George Cox – a Man of Many Parts* in our next Bunyip Lecture (details on p. 12).



Volunteer chef Brad and his kitchen volunteers in Korumburra Renate, Jenni, Pat and Jenni

Food and fellowship at Korumburra community dinners

Pat Fell

A year ago, we shared the story about our Korumburra community dinner. We can now say that these monthly events are proving to be a wonderful way for our community to come together and share food and fellowship. On 6 December, more than 100 guests attended our Christmas dinner (our largest gathering yet), enjoying great food and entertainment. Santa made an appearance and, as always, Rev'd Fran opened proceedings with Grace.

Our parish hall was packed with happy people, whose voices and laughter could be heard amidst the clatter of cutlery, whilst we were entertained by the Milpara Singers, singing carols for all to enjoy.

A delicious Christmas meal of chicken, ham, scalloped potatoes and mixed vegetables, followed by Christmas pudding and custard, was prepared by chef Brad and his enthusiastic band of helpers in the kitchen.

As with all community events, success comes from hard work and good planning, and our thanks go out to our willing and happy volunteers, and to all of the organisations who give their generous support each month.

Our next dinner is scheduled for 7 February and we look forward to further community-spirited dinners in 2020 and beyond.

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The power of the curious question

Rev'd Melissa Lipsett

Where do all the questions go? As any parent of young children knows, little people ask lots of questions. An average pre-schooler asks an estimated 40,000 questions over those four crucial developmental years.

But then what happens? Why do the questions gradually shrivel away?

Looking back on those early years of child-rearing, we read stories – including Bible stories – together most nights, and both parents and children loved that intimate time together.

If I had my time over again, I think I would change how I engaged in my children's teen years. I realise that due to my own anxiety about the potential influence of the fast-changing culture, I operated from a place of fear. I tried to model Christianity and at the same time shut down the doubting questions. It didn't work!

We live in an age of information. Our children can access more ideas in one day than previous generations could encounter in a lifetime! How do we equip these young minds to discern the quality of information they consume? Keep them

asking good questions.

Much of what young people are exposed to, via a plethora of social media channels, runs counter to the values of Christianity. If they do not know how to read an age-appropriate Bible – if we, their parents, have not taught them Bible literacy – how can they possibly interpret the vast amount of ideas, all competing for not just their attention but their allegiance, through a Biblical lens?

Asking curious questions is crucial to learning about our place in this huge world around us. If we suppress these questions, it either forces the questioner to seek other avenues for the answer or it starts to shut down that questioning mind. Why do you think Adolf Hitler wanted books destroyed?

The Creator God made us in God's image. We are made to be curious. To create. To think big. And we have God's word, the Bible, to help us understand the world we inhabit; to ask the questions about who we are, where we came from, why we are here, what is our purpose.

Bible Society thinks a lot about these kinds of questions, because at the very centre of our mission is to grow people's engagement with the Bible. It is only as we engage in

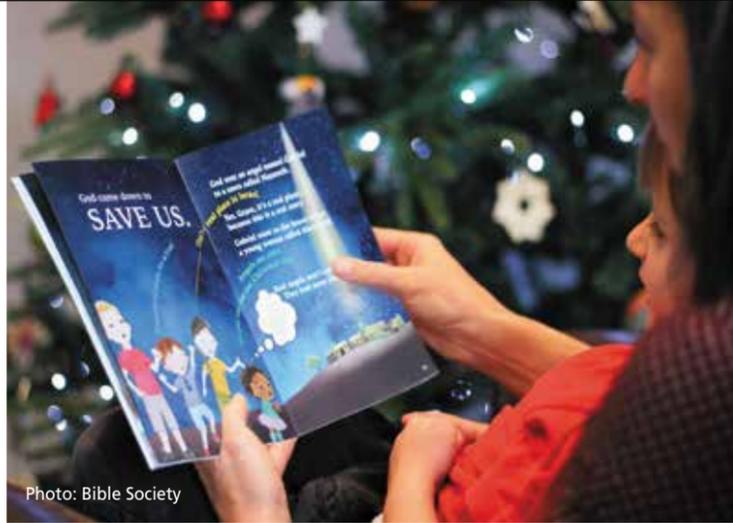


Photo: Bible Society

this sacred text that we start to understand the nature of God. And part of the responsibility of the older Christian is to introduce the next generation to the Bible.

One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.

Psalm 145:4 (NIV)

The curious child lies at the heart of our latest little publication – a children's book about Christmas. Children are the lead actors in this story. As the storyteller starts with "in the beginning God made everything ..." the who, what, why, how questions begin. It speaks to both the innocent and the cynic because God is ready for both. Through stories that give permission for children to ask those enquiring difficult questions we hope we can help equip parents to foster a love of the

Bible with their own children.

Each person, no matter what age, must make that faith decision for themselves. It is only in the wrestling, asking those hard questions, that the seeker finds God through their personal engagement with the Bible. The more that families read the Bible together, in whatever creative ways and channels they can, the more chance of embedding a love of the Bible into the DNA of the next generation.

That is the wonder of the Christian faith. We are being invited to partner with God in a living, breathing story.

Children's questions help us learn to see the world differently. The learning becomes mutual. This idea of shared learning was at the heart of the mentoring model we created as part of my church's children's

ministry several years ago.

We recognised that we needed to get mentoring right from a very early age. And so, we introduced a system that gave responsibility to our children and youth. Primary children were invited to serve in pre-school ministry as helpers. Secondary school students mentored primary schoolers. This model of the older age group working intentionally with the next age down has paid real dividends for this church.

There is less fear because the older age recognises themselves in the questions being asked. They are open, willing to learn together, and out of that model grows true intergenerational Bible engagement.

Our Gen Z and Millennial children are asking the same questions young people have been asking for centuries. Nothing surprises God. Let us be open and ready for any and all questions offered by those younger than us. We can always find the answers together.

The Rev'd Melissa Lipsett is Chief Operating Officer of Bible Society Group, which includes Bible Society Australia, Centre for Public Christianity, Eternity News and Koorong Christian bookshops. She is also currently Chief Executive Office (Acting) of Bible Society Australia Group.

New principal for Gippsland Grammar

Leisa Harper has been appointed the next principal of Gippsland Grammar.

The appointment comes following the announcement late last year that current principal David Baker has accepted the position of principal at Woodleigh School on the Mornington Peninsula.

Mrs Harper will move to Gippsland from Rockhampton in Queensland where she is currently in a consultant role at Rockhampton Grammar School. She was previously principal at Fraser Coast Anglican College and held executive roles at St Paul's School and Brisbane Grammar School. Mrs Harper has worked extensively with the Harvard School of Education and currently serves as a director on the Independent Schools Queensland Board and Queensland Independent Schools Network. In addition



Leisa Harper

to her teaching qualifications, she holds a Masters of Business Administration and a Masters of Educational Studies in Adolescent Psychology.

Mrs Harper said, "The community spirit was evident when I visited Sale and my family enjoy living in regional areas. I am already looking

forward to my first day, so I can meet the Gippsland Grammar staff and students."

Gippsland Grammar Board Chair Vicki McLeod said that over the past seven years Mr Baker had made a lasting impression at Gippsland Grammar and he would be greatly missed by the school community.

Mrs Harper and her husband Graham have three children: Georgia, 18, and twins Phoebe and Rhys, 15. Phoebe and Rhys will transfer to Gippsland Grammar for the beginning of

the 2020 school year.

"Leisa is a deeply committed educator whose passion for young people is evident in all she does," Mrs McLeod said. "She believes that every child has the right to an inclusive and equitable education that promotes and provides life-long learning opportunities and she is committed to academic excellence and strong pastoral care and co-curricular programs."

Mrs Harper will commence her new role at the beginning of Term 2, 2020.



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Labyrinth walkers reflect during Advent

Cynthia Grove

Have you walked a labyrinth? If so, you will know the peace it can bring; if not, this is a special experience waiting for you.

It's a journey that has many turns but no impassable walls. The ancient tradition is known in many cultures and religious traditions, beginning in

the Christian tradition in the Middle Ages, and revived in the 1990s. To walk the labyrinth is a pilgrimage. It is a spiritual journey to the centre of the soul. One walks towards the centre, shedding the external world with its worries and concerns, offering these to God. At the centre is a circle, or perhaps a square, where one can meditate and stand with God. In the

walking out, as you reverse the route, allow God to strengthen and lead you.

In December, the people of St Paul's Sale were blessed with a second visit (the first being two years before) by Christina Rowntree. Around 20 people from our own congregation and from the Uniting Church joined for Christina's leading as she spoke about the labyrinth and then sent us walking a small version on canvas of the labyrinth of Chartres Cathedral (www.atlasobscura.com). First, we were each given a shell containing a gift of the earth, flowers and greenery. We spent time with our gift, listening and resting, then shared our experience. We placed our gifts around the outside of the labyrinth. We reflected on Advent as a threshold into the new church

year. We spoke of our experiences of Advent in Australia, then we walked the labyrinth, shoes off.

After lunch, we painted jacaranda pods and gumnuts for Christmas decorations, a time of reflection and sharing. We then each chose a poem, sight unseen, and spent time with that in prayer and quietness outside in the beauty of the natural world. Each then shared their insights, before being invited to walk – no ... dance – a second labyrinth, this time a square one outlined with black stones between the cathedral and the registry. Christina provided scarves to be waved as we went through the labyrinth. While a few people danced, many of us walked because we needed to watch where we were going; the swinging of the scarves was enthusiastic though.

A wonderfully peaceful, quiet day.

Ecumenical day of study for Lent

In a major ecumenical initiative, the Anglican and Roman Catholic bishops in Gippsland will co-host a seasonal Bible study on Raymond Island in February in the week prior to Ash Wednesday.

The two bishops are inviting clergy and lay people from both dioceses to join with them in a 'Lenten conversation', a study of passages from Matthew and John featured in the common lectionary during Lent this year, and reflection on Lenten themes that speak to our context.

The conversation will be led by two eminent scholars, the Rev'd Professor Mark Lindsay, Professor of Historical Theology, Trinity College Theological School, and Dr Frances Baker RSM, Senior Lecturer in Moral Theology and Systematic Theology, Catholic Theological College.

In commending this gathering to Anglicans across the Diocese, Bishop Richard said:

Ecumenical cooperation is vital to the mission and integrity of both Churches and serves as a witness to the wider community of our essential unity in Christ. The Scriptures are a common source of authority for both Anglicans and Roman Catholics and when we study and reflect on them together we are enriched by the insights and experiences of our sisters and brothers from another tradition. Bishop O'Regan and I join in warmly commending to our clergy and people this opportunity to engage with two fine theologians and with each other.

The gathering will be held at the Abbey, Diocesan Retreat and Conference Centre, Raymond Island on Friday 21 February, 10 am – 3.30 pm.

For further information and bookings, which are essential for catering purposes and any accommodation needs, contact Anna at the Abbey (5156 6580 or info@theabbey.org.au). There will be a catering charge of \$20 per person.

EDITORIAL

Reaching across space, time and faiths

Last year, I completed Harvard University's online open course 'Women making history: ten objects, many stories'. It began with an online guided visual exploration of an unknown object. On the virtual tour, participants were encouraged to 'be curious' as they began to get a sense of the object's size, weight, age, construction, texture and parts.

The object, we later learned, is a camera owned by the first published female photojournalist in the US, Jessie Tarbox Beals, which is now housed at Harvard's Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. The course leads students from considering parts of the 'box', to considering the box as a camera, to considering the woman who owned the camera and the time, place and circumstances in which she lived.

We may choose to consider ideas and values in this way – recognising them for what they are behind influencers such as space, time and faith. Our views of the world are individually tinted, and my aim is to introduce some of that spectrum into these pages, so that TGA is not only about Gippslanders but about people, events and ideas that engage and affect us.

In TGA's new series on rural Victoria (p. 3), readers can venture into other rural dioceses, starting this month with Bendigo, where some of the many murals in the Tongala Street Art project depict well known biblical scenes, such as Moses' parting of the Red Sea.

On page 9 of this issue, in Across the Ages, TGA's new intergenerational segment, the Rev'd Melissa Lipsett, COO of the Bible Society Group, discusses the power of curiosity and how crucial this is for young people to learn about their world. In her discussion of intergenerational reading, she explains that "Through stories that give permission for children to ask those enquiring difficult questions we hope we can help equip parents to foster a love of the Bible with their own children."

In the new segment on this page is news of a forthcoming ecumenical initiative to be held at the Abbey on Raymond Island. Bishop Richard and Patrick O'Regan (Catholic Diocese of Sale) will co-host a 'Lenten conversation' between academics from Trinity College Theological School and Catholic Theological College. "Ecumenical cooperation is vital to the mission and integrity of both Churches and serves as a witness to the wider community of our essential unity in Christ," said Bishop Richard. Future Interfaith stories will highlight the customs, rituals and celebrations outside of the Anglican tradition.

TGA's regular Anglicare correspondent, Cathrine Muston (on p. 4 of this issue), will roam the pages of the newspaper to report in a segment that best fits the activities of her broad-reaching organisation from month to month.

During this testing summer, both parishioners and clergy have been moved to write about their experiences and feelings during the bushfires. In the Reflection on page 11, Warragul's Rev'd Tracy Lauersen shares *A Bushfire Lament*, inspired by Psalm 13. Reflections will alternate with a Sunday to Everyday story, exploring how people are taking their faith beyond the church into their daily lives.

I hope you enjoy the first 2020 issue of TGA.

Sally Woollett

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Photo: Bev Yeates

A Bushfire Lament

inspired by Psalm 13

Rev'd Tracy Lauersen

*Pyrocumulus cloud.
Ember attack
Fire storm
Fire tornado
Fire front*

We've had to learn new phrases, new vocabulary to talk about our tragedy.

*Unprecedented
Catastrophic
Extinction*
We've reached for words to match its awfulness

We've renamed days too:
*Red Tuesday (1898)
Ash Wednesday (1983)
Black Thursday (1851)
Black Friday (1939)
Black Saturday (2009)
Black Sunday (1926, 1955)
Black Christmas (1971)*
We're only missing Monday!

We speak with wet eyes of towns, whose names few of us knew before
*Bruthen and Coongbar
Wyaliba and Willawarrin
Jingalic and Cobargo
Maramingo Creek and
Conjola
Mallacoota.*

And we've pulled out that old faded word that often comes out at a time like this, like an old dusty book that sits on the shelf, rarely opened, somewhat disowned.
Prayer

We're all praying for rain. Believer and unbeliever alike. Rain.
And we're asking of God
*Why hasn't God protected us?
Has God forgotten us?
How can God be good?
Until when will we wait for our prayers to be answered?
Until when will we wait?*

We look at our calendars – and we know we can't take a breath 'til March. It's no longer 'summer', it's 'fire season'
We wake to the smell of smoke.
Our phones lit up with emergency apps
And we're out in our gardens
And we're keeping our grass low
And we're raking up our leaves
And emptying the gutters

But where is the decent rain, Lord?
Forgotten.
That's how we feel.
Look our way!
Just below the 26th parallel.
To our, *your*, great, southern, sunburnt land.

'Thou art coming to a king
Large petitions with thee bring'
'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God'
Here we are.

We stand in prayer.
We kneel in prayer
Our prayers are in our thoughts. Our thoughts turn into prayers.

Look our way, O Lord.
Reach out your hands in mercy and fill those clouds with rain.
Not pitter patter rain.
Not gentle rain.
Not Melbourne rain – give us Brisbane rain!
Not floods, not torrents, but hearty, drenching, life-giving, fire-quenching, renewing rain.

We cannot bring this about ourselves.
We feel our powerlessness, Lord.
Without you, who made and is sovereign over all, we cannot turn the flames back.

We trust that your love will not fail.
That our farms will recover.
Our animals breed.
Our air be refreshed.

Our people re-hoped.
And we will sing your praise again.
For we know your goodness.
Your friendship is genuine.
Your ears are turned towards us.
Your anger is fleeting.
Your love never fails.
Your mercy unending.
Amen.



Photo: Judi Hogan

Gippsland Emergency Relief Fund

The Diocese of Gippsland and the communities of east Gippsland are deeply moved by and profoundly grateful for the prayers and generous support offered by so many individuals, parishes, dioceses and other organisations around the Anglican Communion in response to the bushfire crisis, and assures those dealing with fires and the threat of fires in other parts of our state and nation of the continuing prayers of the clergy and people of Gippsland for you also.

Donations to support the continuing work in the fire affected parishes can be made directly to our diocesan emergency trust fund by EFT:
Account name: Gippsland Emergency Relief
BSB: 705077
Acc: 00040664 (zeros must be included)
Ref: (Name or organisation) – Fire Relief
Cheques can be sent to the fund at:
PO Box 928 Sale Vic, 3850.

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The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland does not tolerate abuse, misconduct and harm in its Christian community.

The Diocese is committed to ensuring all people in contact with the Church can participate in a safe and responsible environment. If you may have been harmed by a church worker, or know someone who has, please come forward.

The Director of Professional Standards, Cheryl Russell, is available, and will maintain confidentiality, on telephone 03 5633 1573, on mobile 0407 563313, or email cherylrussell1@bigpond.com

A LASTING GIFT: A bequest to the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland or your parish

The Church, over the years, has been blessed with the generosity of Anglicans and others in support of its mission. One way you can support this ideal in a relatively easy way, is to make a gift through your will. In the first instance, of course, you will consider carefully the needs of your immediate family and friends before proceeding with a bequest to the church.

We offer a way of helping you to carry out your wishes. Your gift, through your bequest, will be very much appreciated. You may wish to support the Diocese of Gippsland as a whole, or your own parish, or for a particular purpose.

Making your bequest in your Will is a simple procedure, although in preparing or amending your Will you should always consult a solicitor. The Registrar of the Diocese of Gippsland has information to assist you in making a bequest, including the form of words you and your solicitor might want to use.

Telephone Brian Norris on 03 5144 2044, or go to www.gippsanglican.org.au and search 'bequests'.

'Time out' retreat over Easter



For many people, Easter is the time to stay in their parish, to celebrate the wonderful mysteries of the Christian faith

with their 'at home' faith community. Some people are looking for space to dip into Easter from a different place.

From Maundy Thursday to Easter Monday it is 'time out' at the Abbey on Raymond Island. There is no program to meet, nothing that has to be done, but there will be the opportunity to share the Easter Liturgies, enjoy the beautiful Abbey Chapel, the beach, the bushland and the island. There will be time to delight in watching the wildlife – kangaroos, koalas, echidnas and more. Enjoy comfortable motel-style accommodation and the company of other visitors.

For further information, contact the Rev'd Edie Ashley (0423 400 359, edieashley@bigpond.com).

'The Cost of Discipleship: Journeying with Dietrich Bonhoeffer'

Lent Quiet Day, St Paul's Cathedral, Sale
29 February, 11 am – 4 pm

Join Dean of Melbourne The Very Rev'd Dr Andreas Loewe and Dr Katherine Firth for a Lent Quiet Day on Dietrich Bonhoeffer, one of the leading theologians of the 20th century. Sessions will be based on Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, based on a series of lectures delivered at his underground seminary in an abandoned school on an estate in Finkenwalde (today's Zdroje in Poland). This seminal book developed Bonhoeffer's ideas about what discipleship meant and what it requires of people who seek to follow Jesus.

9 April 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of Bonhoeffer's martyrdom. Dr Loewe's and

Dr Firth's book, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Six Steps on the Path of Discipleship* (Morning Star Publishing, 2019), will be available for purchase (\$20) and signing by the authors on the day.

Sessions outline

Morning coffee

Opening prayer

Session 1

Bible Reading: Luke 15.1-10 (The Lost Sheep and the Lost Coin)

Costly Grace (Dean Andreas Loewe and Dr Katherine Firth)

Personal reflection time

Prayers

Lunch break

Session 2

Bible Reading: Luke 19.28-40 (Jesus' entry into Jerusalem)

Being Christ's Body (Dean Andreas Loewe and Dr Katherine Firth)

Personal reflection time

Tea

Concluding prayer

Launch of Listening Post at Moe

After many months of planning and strategic action, Moe-Newborough Church is ready to launch the Listening Post, at a venue located in the newly refurbished Madge Vinell Centre, next to Moe Police Station, Anzac St, Moe.

The launch heralds an opportunity for outreach to anyone in the community who might like to call in for a chat and some refreshment within a friendly, non-judgemental environment. If required, information can be provided concerning support agencies in the community. We have a group of keen volunteers trained in the art of listening, ready to start welcoming the community in the near future.

Bishop Richard will formally launch this venture on Friday, 14 February at 10 am at the centre. We are grateful for all the support and generous donations we have received to enable this vision of a safe, friendly community space come to fruition. God has more than answered our prayers!

Diocesan calendar

February

- 9 6 pm: Community Evening after the fires, with free BBQ and music. Buchan Recreation Reserve, Buchan.
- 14 10 am: Launch of the Listening Post, Moe–Newborough Anglican Church community program, an outreach for people to drop in and have a cuppa and a chat with our volunteer team at our refurbished location. Madge Vinell Centre, 7 Anzac St, Moe
- 21 10 am – 3.30 pm: Ecumenical Lenten study. Bookings essential. \$20 per person for catering. the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 5156 6580, info@theabbey.org.au
- 28 10 am – 1 pm: Fridays in Lent at the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 10 am morning prayer, 10.30 am time to relax, reflect, pray, plant, enjoy the Abbey, 12 noon share a lunch provided
- 29 11 am – 4 pm: Lent Quiet Day – 'The Cost of Discipleship: Journeying with Dietrich Bonhoeffer'. St Paul's Cathedral, Cunninghame St, Sale

March

- 6 10 am – 1 pm: Fridays in Lent at the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 10 am – morning prayer, 10.30 am – time to relax, reflect, pray, plant, enjoy the Abbey, 12 noon – share a lunch provided
- 13 10 am – 1 pm: Fridays in Lent at the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 10 am – morning prayer, 10.30 am – time to relax, reflect, pray, plant, enjoy the Abbey, 12 noon – share a lunch provided
- 20 10 am – 1 pm: Fridays in Lent at the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 10 am – morning prayer, 10.30 am – time to relax, reflect, pray, plant, enjoy the Abbey, 12 noon – share a lunch provided
- 25 11 am: Mothers' Union celebration of Lady Day. Eucharist and after-lunch speaker Bishop Richard. St Paul's Cathedral, Cunninghame St, Sale 5611 0326, jennymacrobb@gmail.com
- 27 10 am – 1 pm: Fridays in Lent at the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 10 am – morning prayer, 10.30 am – time to relax, reflect, pray, plant, enjoy the Abbey, 12 noon – share a lunch provided

April

- 3 10 am – 1 pm: Fridays in Lent at the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island. 10 am – morning prayer, 10.30 am – time to relax, reflect, pray, plant, enjoy the Abbey, 12 noon – share a lunch provided
- 7 11 am: The Chrism Eucharist renewal of ministry vows. St Paul's Cathedral, Cunninghame St, Sale
- 9–13 Easter retreat at the Abbey (see main text)
- 10 3 pm: Stations of the Cross using Gippsland artist Pat Waters' remarkable paintings. St Thomas' Bunyip, 16 A'Beckett Rd, Bunyip
- 19 2 pm: 10th Bunyip Lecture – Joy Cullen from Mornington to speak about pioneer Gippsland priest George Cox. St Thomas' Bunyip, 16 A'Beckett Rd, Bunyip
- 27–30 Clergy conference, the Abbey, 1–25 First Pde, Raymond Island



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