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# The Gippsland Anglican

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*In the beginning God created  
the heavens and the earth ...*

(Gen 1:1)

*In the beginning was the Word ...  
and the Word became flesh  
and lived among us.*

(John 1:1, 14)



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Making room: an Advent aspiration



Famously, in Luke’s nativity story, there is ‘no room at the inn’.

This great season of Advent is all about making room – making room for God; making room for each other; making room for the future.

Seasons that feature the colour purple in worship are traditionally times of preparation. Lent has a somewhat penitential flavour to it. Advent, by contrast, is a time of expectant waiting – ‘nesting’, as it were – ahead of the birth of a newborn king who will grow up to subvert all our notions of kingship and power, as we heard on the last Sunday before Advent – the feast of Christ the King – in the gospel passage from Jesus’ trial before Pilate.

In her reflection on Advent and *asana* later in this issue (p. 6), TGA Editor Sally Woollett helpfully describes the discipline of preparing for meditation as a kind of ‘clearing out’ so that one

might ‘tune in’ – creating an inner space where something may (or may not) enter or emerge from within.

So too might our prayer in Advent be less of a ‘wish list’ – even for commonly held gifts and philanthropic goods like peace in our world or an end to COVID – and more of that attitude of still and quiet listening: making room for the Word of God to address us again and afresh.

In parallel with the recent COP26 UN Conference on climate change, the bishops in my Lambeth Conversation group (which has been meeting online monthly in preparation for Lambeth 2022) thought about efforts to arrest – if not reverse – climate change in terms of making room for each other.

This has two equally important aspects. First, making room for those with whom we share God’s good creation now, and especially in those places where – geographically or socioeconomically – climate change is having and is likely to have the biggest impact. And second, making room in our present moment for future generations, that there might be a safe place for them to live and love and thrive in God’s sabbath rest.

Just as in Advent we wait and watch for God’s future to meet us here and now (a

hope we reprise each time we pray ‘your kingdom come’), so in our actions with respect to ecological sustainability we train our eyes to the horizons: mindful of those who will come after us, and accountable to those who have gone before us.

Many of us will be busily making room in our homes and our calendars: extra space at the Christmas table or somewhere for a visiting friend or relative to stay; time to spend catching up with family members, or to be re-created by a holiday. Such annual rituals and pleasures are perhaps all the more precious this year given they could not be assumed or taken for granted even a few short weeks ago.

And that experience may carry something of spiritual importance and value. As we go about making room in all these ways our gratitude in simply being able to do so could help us attend to the mystery of ‘divine hospitality’ in which we are held at all times.

In a Judeo-Christian worldview, creation exists because ‘in the beginning’ God made room for something other than Godself. At the altar-table we experience that divine hospitality sacramentally, as is so tenderly captured by Paul Davine’s poem on the back page of this issue.

Our challenge, and our delight, is to see and experience every table as an extension of that eucharistic feast, at which Christ himself is both Guest and Host. And not only our table fellowship but all the ways large and small, by which we actively share the world God so loves with others, past, present and future.

Though there was no room at the inn, God has been making room for us and for all creatures since the very beginning. In Luke’s parable of the great banquet (14:15-24) the host sends his servant to call in those invited, who duly does so, returning to report: ‘What you ordered has been done, and still there is room.’

Let us be mindful to make room in our hearts this Advent – room for God, room for each other, room for the future – as we prepare to welcome into every part of our lives the one who – having shared our flesh – is already there, waiting for us.

May the greatest gift you receive and pass on this Christmas be that of divine hospitality. And may you know the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the generosity of the wise ones, the devotion of Mary and Joseph, and the peace of the Christ Child.

+Rm

God for whom we watch and wait,  
you sent John the Baptist to prepare  
the way of your Son: give us courage  
to speak the truth, to hunger for justice,  
and to suffer for the cause of right,  
with Jesus Christ our Lord.

(CW)



# 145 years of Mothers' Union

Maryann Ashton

One of the many events that had to be cancelled earlier this year was a celebration on Mary Sumner Day. This day is celebrated on 9 August every year within Mothers' Union to commemorate its founder, Mary Sumner. This year is a significant year, being the 145th anniversary of the beginning of Mothers' Union. It is also 100 years after Mary's death.

Mary was the wife of Rev'd George Sumner, Rector of Old Alresford, a parish in the Diocese of Winchester in England. Mary was very aware of the responsibilities and stresses for the wives in the area as they sought to bring up their young families. In 1876, Mary invited a group of 30 to 40 mothers from the community to her home. Although Mary knew these women, she was so nervous that she asked her husband to speak to them. A week later they met again and this time

she was able to speak. The group continued to meet on a weekly basis, with numbers growing steadily – praying and giving support and encouragement to the women across the parish.

In 1885, George was appointed Archdeacon and Canon Residentiary of Winchester. This meant a physical move to a house there. They attended a large congress in Portsmouth where the Bishop of Newcastle was chairman. He looked around the hall and saw many women who were obviously poor and in distress – he saw their need for help and encouragement, and made a momentous decision. He would ask a woman to address the meeting. The Bishop turned to Mary Sumner. She was appalled. The Bishop insisted and gave his blessing.

Mary Sumner spoke with great conviction of her dream of a union of mothers of all classes, who could unite in prayer and with God's help improve the home life of the nation.



This kit was designed and created on StitchCraft software  
[www.stitchcraft.info](http://www.stitchcraft.info)

by Catherine Cope © 2014

The following day, a group of influential women of the Diocese of Winchester met. Shortly after, Mothers' Union was inaugurated as a diocesan organisation within the Church of England and the Diocese of Winchester. The organisation grew and spread to other dioceses and across the world.

Mothers' Union in Australia had its beginning in Cullenswood, Tasmania in 1892. Now Mothers' Union has links in 84 countries with more than four million members.

We give thanks for Mary Sumner, her vision and willingness to be used by God.

Mary Sumner's Prayer

*All this day O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for Thee; and every life I touch do Thou by Thy Spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen.*

For instructions to embroider Mary Sumner's prayer, visit [www.muaustralia.org.au/craft.html](http://www.muaustralia.org.au/craft.html).



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# Parish Partnership grants helping build connection

Cathrine Muston

Four Gippsland parishes have received Parish Partnership grants to support their community outreach. Among the successful projects in the recent October round were a reflective garden, a children's play space, a new playgroup and a contribution towards the employment of a Families Outreach worker.

The community of Cann River has faced numerous hardships in the past two years. The increased isolation of COVID lockdowns alongside living in a place that faced fire on four fronts, a one-hour drive through burnt forest to get to the nearest supermarket for supplies, and the drying up of the tourist traffic, have taken a toll. Despite this, the congregation at St John's Cann River have gathered representatives from the local school, CFA, environmental groups, Bush Church Aid nomads, Bushfire Recovery Victoria and local Indigenous Elders to plan an outdoor meeting area for reflection alongside a community garden. To be implemented in two stages, and extending the nature walk created by Landcare, the garden will draw on the skills of locals as well as supporters from across the state. It will also combine with Year 9/10 Design and Technology students from



Working bee at the Poowong Community Garden

Cann River Secondary College, who will design and build the seating for the area. When completed, the church property will be a connection point and regeneration for locals and tourists (when they can return) alike.

Since launching just one year ago, the Poowong Community Garden has been growing vegetables and friendships in the local community. Recognising that families see the environment and its regeneration as significant, the congregation focuses on building a space where children are not only occupied but also engaged in the growing and care of plants. The Parish Partnership grant will enable the parish to build a sandpit for little ones and, eventually, low tables for young children to participate in the potting of plants. The Poowong community has been active in engaging many locals and has enlisted

Poowong school students to paint bollards to decorate the area. With an increased need for outdoor activities to be COVID safe, the community garden is an excellent way to keep in touch and build friendships.

Small children and their parents have had a difficult time over the past 18 months of COVID lockdowns. Stacey Williamson from St Peter's Leongatha recognised an increased need for a space for young children and their parents and has gathered an impressive group of volunteers around her to initiate a playgroup for preschoolers in the parish hall. Playgroups are a well-established and evidence-based way of engaging local families with members of the parish through play, stories and relationships. The Parish Partnership grant funding will enable St Peter's and Stacey to set up an interesting and

engaging space to welcome preschoolers and their carers.

Our communities are richer when all generations are welcomed and represented, but this requires focus and coordination. The Warragul parish has been involved in many outreach and community engagement activities over the years, but lockdowns have meant that some have lost momentum and need to be picked up again. The parish application for support for a Families Outreach worker to spend one day each week coordinating *mainly music* and the Kids Hope program in Warragul Primary School as well as initiate a school holiday club was successful for this reason. Engaging young people, children and families is exactly what the Parish Partnership funding was designed to do, recognising that the needs of these groups are many and that local congregations are both

committed and resourceful in meeting them.

The Cathedral parish of Sale has operated an emergency food cupboard for many years to support those in need of food after hours. Supported mainly through donations from the parish and Gippsland Grammar students, the food cupboard is well stocked. A small parish partnership grant has enabled the cupboard to have improved climate control to ensure the shelf life of donations.

Every year, the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland provides a total of \$20,000 to distribute to parishes engaged in community activities. The next grant application round is April 2022. If some of these ideas have inspired you, perhaps you can discuss it with your rector and wardens. For more ideas or guidance, contact Cathrine Muston, Parish Partnerships Coordinator: 0458 450 370.

## Vicki Levey begins as Gippsland Regional Director for Anglicare Victoria

Cathrine Muston

Vicki Levey is the new Gippsland Regional Director for Anglicare Victoria. Starting the role in October, Vicki was already well known to the many Anglicare Victoria staff who are based at the Orange Door in Morwell, where she was Family Safety Manager, overseeing the implementation of the state government's responses to family violence in Gippsland. This role involved the bringing together of all agencies working in the area and coordinating support for families in crisis.

Before that, Vicki spent many years working for the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing in Child Protection.

A passion for children, youth and families is what has driven Vicki throughout her career, so it is no surprise that she has found her way to Anglicare Victoria. She is currently studying for a Masters in Public Administration and Leadership.

Vicki is a Gippslander through and through, having grown up in Nyora and now living with her family in Warragul. Vicki is married with two adult children,

Charlotte and Riley. She and husband Clint manage to keep a work-life balance by walking their dog, Wynston, and caravanning with the family around the beautiful beaches of Gippsland.

Vicki has not yet had any formal connection with the Anglican Church, but she is looking forward to making herself known to the many supporters from Anglican parishes across the Diocese. There are sure to be opportunities in the coming years for Gippsland parishes to meet Vicki and to show our continued support for the broader work of Anglicare Victoria.



Vicki Levey, Gippsland Regional Director for Anglicare Victoria



# Operation Christmas Child at St Mary's Morwell

Carolyn Raymond

Over many years, St Mary's congregation has participated in Operation Christmas Child. This year, in spite of COVID, we have continued to be part of the program. Many of the congregation collected small gifts children would enjoy and would find useful. This meant toys, books, items of clothing and everyday items such as toothbrushes. These were packed in shoe boxes, each for a boy or girl of a particular age, and piled in front of the altar on a Sunday in late October.

That Sunday, we had a visit from Lois White and Dawn Moore. These amazing women work for Operation Christmas Child, and their dedication takes them right across Gippsland, as they tell parishes about the program, and they collect and send the

boxes on their way to children across the world.

Dawn and Lois shared with us the history of Operation Christmas Child. It began in 1990 when business owner Dave Cooke was travelling in Romania. He was saddened by the many families living in poverty. He began to collect shoe boxes filled with gifts for the children. In the first year he collected 3000 boxes. The program quickly became too big for Dave, and Samaritan's Purse took over. In 1993, a total of 28,000 boxes were sent to Bosnia and Croatia. Now, 150 million boxes have been distributed to 150 countries. The boxes bring gifts, and Christ's love for each child.

Each country has a national leadership team which organises the distribution of boxes, mostly through local schools. Each year, different villages are selected to receive the gifts.

Operation Christmas Child also organises a 12-week course, including books for teachers and students, about Jesus and his love for them.

Dawn and Lois told us of a trip they experienced to Cambodia to help distribute the boxes. To live in such a poor country and meet the children was a very moving experience. They visited many of the programs that Operation Christmas Child runs with

local people to assist in providing for some of their basic needs.

Dawn told me that the St Mary's boxes would be on their way to Cambodia via Adelaide the very next day.

I am sure St Mary's will continue to be part of Operation Christmas Child for many years to come.



*This year's gift boxes from St Mary's are destined for Cambodia*

# Federation time capsule unearthed at Korumburra

Martin Shaw

In 2001, along with other community groups and families, the Parish of Korumburra and Poowong placed an envelope full of goodies in a time capsule. Twenty years on from this initiative of the Korumburra Lions Club, we were invited to the opening of the capsule. There certainly was an element of anticipation as we opened our envelopes. For us, the contents provided not only lots of memories for our long-term parishioners but also historical interest for the more recent newcomers to the parish.

Inside were two copies of *Of Parish and People*, the parish's monthly newsletter. It has since been renamed *Parish Notes*, which continues to be enjoyed by readers today. Reference was made to the then three churches in the parish: St Paul's Korumburra, All Saints Poowong and St Paul's Loch.



*The Rev'd Fran Grimes with the July 2001 issue of The Gippsland Anglican*

Although Loch still is part of our parish, there is no longer an Anglican church in town. One story featured in the May-June issue recounted the excursion of a group of 14 people, at the invitation of Bishop Arthur, to make a visit to Bishops court. After being greeted by the bishop and Valerie Jones, the group enjoyed Devonshire tea and a tour of the residence. Reading the story, you could feel the joy of the day – evidently it was a special trip for all.

The headline article featured in the capsule's July 2001 edition of *The Gippsland Anglican* was entitled 'Bishop Arthur lays up his staff'. The ninth Bishop of Gippsland had retired in June and he and his wife, Valerie, were farewelled at a function held in the Memorial Hall in Sale.

The envelope also included two pew sheets from June and

July 2001, and a news clipping, from an unidentified source, about the heartfelt farewell given to our Archdeacon, the Ven Noel Richards, at our parish hall. It featured a photo of him together with long-time parishioners Nancye and Frank Harley. He had faithfully served Gippsland for 30 years.

The contents of the envelope are currently on display at the rear of St Paul's Korumburra for all to read and enjoy. Several of our current parishioners are mentioned in the documents, and no doubt stories will be shared as memories are revived.

In December, another time capsule will be buried for opening in 2041, and we are all currently putting our thinking caps on to decide the contents that best represent the current life of our parish for those opening the envelope in 20 years' time.

## Advent and Christmas Appeal 2021

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# Why wait? Lessons learned in Advent and *asana*

**Sally Woollett**

Anyone who has ever explored meditation will know that it's much harder than it looks. As with many things worth doing, change happens gradually and with sustained practice. To use a well-worn cliché, it's about the journey, not the destination.



The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland



## Is God calling you to prison chaplaincy?

Responding to the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Anglican Criminal Justice Ministry seek to be a demonstration and announcement of God's love to all people, including those who have been affected by the criminal and youth justice systems in Victoria. Our aim is to support people in their journey to becoming the people that God has created and called them to be. Our chaplaincy program ministers to people who are incarcerated in prisons and juvenile detention centres, and/or have been released from prison.

We are looking for a suitable person to minister in the Fulham Correctional Centre, for 14 hours per week. Fulham is a medium security prison housing approximately 1000 men and is situated in Sale, in the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland.

Applicants may be ordained or lay members of the Anglican Church. The successful applicant will have:

- Ministry and/or pastoral experience
- Well-developed interpersonal skills and self-awareness
- Ability to read and negotiate complex and sometimes dangerous institutional cultures
- Formal theological formation

One unit of Clinical Pastoral Education or equivalent is desirable.

For more information regarding this position, please contact Kate Schnerring at [acjm@anglicarevic.org.au](mailto:acjm@anglicarevic.org.au)

In some styles of yoga, the preparation for meditation is years of *asana*, the many yoga positions that prime the physical body for sustained sitting. The idea is that only when your physical body is ready can your mind tune in and truly listen to your environment and to yourself – to what is happening right now.

During particularly long and physical *asana* sessions, it is a natural wish to turn to the wall clock, wistfully and often: 'How much longer do I have to do this? When will it end?' During such sessions, I came to see the wall clock as a temptation to be resisted. Its analogue features were a cruel reminder of time that had dragged on and the long minutes ahead. You're never in the present when you're looking at a clock.

In a neat side-step of the hype around meditation, my yoga teacher would instead refer to 'silent sitting'. He would ask yoga students just to sit still and wait – without the expectation of any particular arrival – to acknowledge only fleetingly any thoughts that came our way. In our silent sitting, as in our learning of *asana*, we were (ideally) to be humble, empty vessels, existing moment to moment.

*The Advent wreath, embracing the eternity of God, the immortality of the soul, and everlasting life in Christ.*

So we would sit and wait, for the imagined bus or person or hoped-for enlightenment; too aware of the sighs and fidgets of our neighbouring yogis; feeling the protests of our mortal bodies; trying not to float away in rumination and prediction – those intruders that overflow our cups in untimely, unhelpful, unwelcome ways.

Well before Advent each year, ahead of the joyful waiting and preparation, we witness the predictable, premature and relentless urging of the commercial Christmas season. I asked Cathedral Dean Susanna Pain how she has been tuning out this commercial 'noise' before Christmas and before her forthcoming interstate move. As well as meditation and a walk around Lake Guthridge each day, Susanna described an online Christian meditation she recently led during Advent. It was "an antidote," she said, "meditating three times a day, in community, slowing down, resting and waiting."

During the long periods of uncertainty and waiting during COVID, Susanna said "It's such a gift to pray together with people from around the Diocese and beyond on Zoom each day. Recorded services and live streaming have allowed many to be part of the worshipping community in a time of lockdown, and now way beyond that ... I love Interplay, and we have been able to do that with people from around the world regularly since COVID began."

Waiting, expectation and uncertainty also featured in the lead-up to the recent COP26 climate conference. As to how young people might best nurture hope for an uncertain future, Susanna said, "Young people can continue to speak up about what is important, they can continue to challenge us and encourage us to make positive decisions for the good of our planet and her people, and all creatures."

## The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

seeks expressions of interest for the position of  
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# Conversations we need to have

Rev'd Jo White

Prayer can be described as a good conversation with Jesus. What makes a good conversation is usually a sense of mutual trust. As a priest, I have a great many conversations with people and I suppose the most difficult part is to listen and to listen without judgement. My mum used to say I had been inoculated with a gramophone needle at birth. This was because in her view I talked too much and maybe she was right. My grandma would say we have two ears and one mouth, so we should listen twice as much as we talk. Good advice.

Recently as part of my daily prayers I have been using a little book entitled *Praying with Teresa of Avila*, by Rosemary Broughton. St Teresa of Avila believed that, in the early stages of prayer, God often speaks to people in and through good conversations with their friends. In her own life, Teresa had many ongoing conversations with spiritual directors, friends, supervisors, members of her convent and others. The important thing here is the quality



Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien

Saint Teresa of Ávila (c. 1615), Peter Paul Rubens

of those conversations. A good conversation is not about idle chatter or gossip. A good conversation has a particular flavour and texture. A good conversation can be a source of consolation

and discernment. Such conversations can help us feel God's little nudges. They can guide us, comfort us and sometimes spark new thoughts or discipline us, so that we are the better for that conversation.

Teresa regularly took her conversations to prayer, and her prayer to conversations with trusted friends and advisors. Conversation is an art that needs to be learned. It is not always easy to talk with someone else, nor is it easy to really listen to them. Conversation about the things of God is both easier

and harder than other conversations. But these are the conversations we need to have, not just with trusted Christian friends, but with the people we meet at the golf club, down the pub, at craft group or book club.

It is easier to have good conversations, because the word of God can truly touch our hearts and attract our minds. It is also harder, because we may find that we don't have the words. Just start and practice, because as we begin to disclose our spiritual self and put words to our searching and finding,

then we discover our inner journey opening up to grace. When we open our soul to a confidant, the Holy Spirit comes into the conversation with us, purifying and consoling, cleansing and satisfying.

Here are some ideas from the book that might help.

## Precious conversations

Recall one or two people who have been important to you in your life with God. Bring to mind the most important thing each one has said to you. Praise God for the presence of that person and conversation in your life.

## Pivotal conversations

Recall a conversation that helped you come to an important decision, or marked a turning point in your life. Take time to visualise that whole conversation, where you were, who it was with, and your feelings as you talked. Praise God for that time and that conversation.

## Conversations for all seasons

On any given day I have all sorts of conversations. Some of them are trivial, some are very deep and precious, some are just about the how and what of the day's activities. Chewing over the wisdom of Teresa of Avila has helped me value all these conversations and to try that little bit harder to make my conversations good ones.

I am reminded of the words of Paul in his letter to the Ephesians (4:29): "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear."



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## The impacts of COVID-19 on vulnerable families could last years. Let's ensure no Victorian is left behind.

Anglicare Victoria recently released a report, *COVID-19: Impacting a generation*, which confirmed that the aftershocks of the pandemic will not only be more severe for many but are likely to last years.

**We have created a Pandemic Recovery Fund for those most affected, and need your help to raise \$250,000 and ensure no Victorian is left behind.**

Your donation will directly support our emergency relief services, our family services and the important education support for young people continuing to struggle at school; this fund will ensure no one is left behind when the pandemic ends.

**Please donate this Christmas.**

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# “What is God asking of Australia?”

## Catholic discernment at Fifth Plenary Council

Fr Denis O'Bryan

I have had the joy of ministering as a Catholic priest in the Diocese of Sale for over 40 years, experiencing all the variety of country life in Gippsland. Having grown up on a dairy farm near Leongatha in South Gippsland, I have ministered as a priest in parishes small and large, many of which are within the area of the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland.

My present parish of Clyde North is a new and rapidly developing parish in the growth area between Cranbourne and Berwick, at the western end of the Catholic Diocese of Sale, where the churches have large congregations. The experience is very different to that of the years I spent in Omeo and Bairnsdale in East Gippsland, where many of the rural communities were small, often distant from one another, and with diminishing community populations. This diminishing population affects every aspect of the life of those communities, from schools to sporting clubs and, of course, churches.



Aaron Burden/Unsplash

When we look at this picture repeated all over Australia, we see a multitude of small rural parishes that no longer have a resident priest, and churches that may have Mass only every second week or even monthly. One priest is often serving a group of parishes, with a lot of travel, and very often now these priests are also born overseas and living in a very different culture from the one with

which they are most familiar. It's a huge change for the families who have lived in these rural communities, mostly for generations, and have a great love for and commitment to their churches; and it is a huge change for the priests. It can be an isolating experience for them, underlining the need for good communication and hospitality between priests and parishioners.

Over the past 30 years, many rural Catholic church communities that no longer have a Mass every Sunday have continued to gather weekly for a lay-led liturgy according to the *Directory for Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest* (1988). Those formed as leaders of these lay-led liturgies, which occur when Mass cannot be celebrated, include women and men, and the liturgies are themselves vital to the ongoing life of these churches.

And, as people in these small rural communities know, the shared faith, prayer, outreach and in some cases shared church buildings between Catholic, Anglican, Uniting and other Christian churches is a vital and invigorating ecumenical aspect of the life of those church communities.

As a delegate to the Fifth Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia I was very conscious immediately of the amazing ability of modern technology to connect people and the possibilities it holds for the future. The First Assembly of the Plenary Council was already delayed a year by the COVID pandemic restrictions, and when the Assembly occurred, in October of this year, all of the nearly 280 delegates participated remotely.

The Plenary Council is a synodal process, which began with an extensive 'listening and dialogue' in which more than 220,000 people nationwide participated, reflecting on the question, "What do you think God is asking of Australia at this time?"

The submissions were as diverse as the participants, but every submission contributed to the formation of six National Themes for Discernment; how God is calling us to be a Christ-centred Church: Missionary and Evangelising; Inclusive, Participatory and Synodal; Prayerful and Eucharistic; Humble, Healing and Merciful; A Joyful, Hope filled and Servant community; Open to

Conversion, Renewal and Reform. These national themes have themselves shaped the agenda for the Plenary Council. This agenda calls the delegates of the Plenary Council to develop concrete proposals to create a more missionary, Christ-centred Church in Australia at this time, in its cities and rural areas. Family life was recognised as crucial, as is our life of prayer, forming and ever-deepening our personal relationships with Jesus.

The delegates in the First Assembly, women and men, were as diverse as the Catholic Church is in Australia, including delegates from the Eastern Catholic Churches. However, the process of the First Assembly brought us together in prayerful discernment. The delegates spent a major part of each day in 10 smaller groups, each group focusing for the whole week on one or two of the agenda questions, and then reporting back to the whole Assembly during the daily Plenary sessions.

The recommendations from the First Assembly of the Plenary Council will now, through a further process of prayerful discernment, be drafted into proposals, which will be voted on at the Second Assembly of the Plenary Council, to be held in Sydney in July 2022.

So, we are in the middle of a process that will ultimately come to a time of implementation in our parishes, with parishioners and clergy participating together to reap the fruits of the Plenary Council.

My experience at this moment is hope filled, and confident that, through the prayerfulness of all the Delegates, the Holy Spirit is truly shaping the Catholic Church anew in Australia. We appreciate very deeply the prayerful support for this process in the Catholic Church from Christians with whom we share our journey and our lives of faith.

*Fr Denis O'Bryan  
is Episcopal Vicar for  
Clergy in the Catholic  
Diocese of Sale.*

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# Seasons of the soul

Rev'd Daniel Lowe

Our lives are governed by seasons of all sorts and it is amazing how much our perspective on life is influenced by the season we are in. Even seasonal entertainment has an impact. During a season of *Lego Masters*, everyone suddenly gets inspired to play with Lego. During a season of *Ninja Warrior*, there are kids hanging off doorways and climbing anything they can. Of course, it is no different with the weather. Spring gets everyone out exercising; summer has us heading to the nearest beach or pool; winter is all about onesies, heaters, books and puzzles. There is a time and a place for everything. Communities experience seasons too and we have been reflecting on

some of the seasons of St Paul's Anglican Grammar School at our school anniversary services.

Just as there are seasons in nature, there are seasons in our lives. Each season does an important thing. Each season is necessary, and it helps to know what season it is, because recognising the season helps us to respond appropriately.

There are spring seasons in life where we are starting new things. New friendships, new ventures, new goals. These are exciting times. Summer seasons in life are times of warmth, fun and relaxation. Wouldn't it be nice if life was summer all the time? It sounds good but an endless summer leads to drought and death. It isn't sustainable. Enjoy those summer seasons in life but don't be fooled into thinking they will last forever.

Summer too is a season that passes.

Autumn is a maturing time. A working time. This is where a lot of us fall down. This is the study before the exam, the practice before the performance, the training before the competition. You are a newbie, a beginner no longer and more is expected of you. You are still growing but that growth is slower and deeper. Autumn is where real progress is made. It can be a hard season, but it also has its own beauty.

And then there are life's winters. Winter does some important work. The roots go deep in winter. The earth is replenished and prepares for spring, catches its breath, and nourishes itself; and things die in winter. That's hard for us. We want everything to keep on going all the time. It can't. There is not enough space in

our life; there's not enough time in our life. There's a necessary time in our life to let things go. Winters can be a sad time but they too do not last forever.

Whatever season you are in, there are a couple of things that can be helpful to remember. First, seasons are temporary. They don't last. If you are in a good season, enjoy it with the knowledge that it may not always be there. If you are in a tough season, take comfort in the knowledge that it is not forever. Second, seasons change but God is constant. There are two things that will always be in every season of your life – you and God. Now you may be more aware of one than the other, but in any season of life that you experience, God will be somewhere in it with you.

In words made famous in song, the writer of Ecclesiastes writes (3:1-8):

*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under*

*the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing, a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace.*

Whatever life looks like for you right now, remember that seasons change but God is constant and is with us, regardless of the season.

*The Rev'd Daniel Lowe is Senior Chaplain at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School.*

## "The show must go on": pursuing performance dreams during COVID

Paula Walland

In uncertain COVID times, when we all might have been wishing for something magical to change things for the better, secondary students at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School persevered through a series of lockdowns to pursue their performance

dreams. In 2021, both the Traralgon and Warragul secondary schools worked towards providing co-curricular opportunities in performing arts in the form of two major musicals: *Mary Poppins JR* (Traralgon) and *Alice in Wonderland* (Warragul).

Even in ordinary circumstances, musicals require a lot of hard work to prepare

for live performances, and lockdown interruptions created an additional set of challenges. Musical directors Nathan Byrne (Traralgon) and Kylie Sinclair (Warragul) worked with fierce determination to ensure students continued to receive a breadth of musical production experience. Earlier in the year, students were able to rehearse in person;

in periods of lockdown, weekly rehearsals continued online via video-conference. Full rehearsals were also conducted online, a first in the history of St Paul's.

The old adage "Teamwork makes the dream work" was very evident this year. Students, along with generous staff and school community members, assisted to construct sets at home and on campus when permitted. Props and costumes were sourced and made, often requiring creative solutions. Students took on choreography for individual songs and Year 11 Theatre Studies students contributed to elements of the Warragul's show design as part of their assessment work for VCE studies.

At Traralgon, ever-hopeful that the show would go on, students and staff took inspiration from Mary Poppins' advice that "Anything can happen if you let it" and worked tirelessly to prepare. Just as Mary has a profound effect on the Banks family in the story, so too did musical director Nathan Byrne inspire his students. Every rehearsal was conducted with boundless determination for the show to proceed. He is extremely proud of the students' commitment to the show and said, "The students were incredibly resilient

throughout the frequent changes in rehearsal format. It was quite incredible that we were able to keep the show moving at a remarkable rate for such a long period of time this year, especially when there was so much uncertainty. It is important that students are given the chance to pursue their craft potential through the pandemic, as this is an incredibly important outlet for so many students."

In Warragul, Kylie Sinclair carefully chose *Alice in Wonderland* for its potential to uplift the spirits of not only students but also those in the community. Kylie said, "I was keen to find a play that would bring an audience back to the theatre and allow them to be transported out of a difficult COVID-19 world for a while. I also believed the laughter the characters would generate could be the prescription that we all needed in uncertain times."

Throughout the year, the students remained optimistic about performing to a live audience. Unfortunately, due to a continuation of restrictions, live shows did not eventuate. Nevertheless, both *Mary Poppins JR* and *Alice in Wonderland* were memorable experiences for everyone.



*The Mad Hatter's Tea Party set for Alice in Wonderland*



# Understanding community strengths

Celeste Young

*Adversity is a cloak that shrouds great gifts. It is up to us to cast away the cloak and reveal all that lies within. This is the journey.*

Milena Cifali,  
Mallacoota Time:  
The Lost Summer 2020

Earlier this year, our team at Victoria University spent three months in conversation with people in Gippsland who had been directly and indirectly affected following the bushfires in 2019–20. We really wanted to understand how different communities and cohorts within them experienced their strengths following these fires and what this meant in terms of recovery and their capabilities. It was a humbling and at times confronting experience, but one that has unveiled some of the deeper and less visible aspects of communities that underpin their survival.

Gippsland communities are nuanced and diverse, with each having unique characteristics. Uncovering what was most important to these communities and what they need to function highlighted the importance of local knowledge. Communities know their people particularly well in rural and regional areas – they understand where they are and how they live. However, accessing this knowledge requires respect and care. The people we spoke with valued their privacy, and trust was central to them sharing information with others.

Throughout our conversations it became apparent how fundamentally different this process of recovery had been. These fires burnt for longer and were more intense, resulting in greater disruption and fatigue to communities in the region.

*We lost a lot of sleep and were exhausted from the smoke, and there wasn't really one day ... to say the fire's finished, we have got to start recovering. It was a continual process.*

Just as communities were coming together and making sense of what had happened, COVIDhit—completely disrupting established patterns of recovery. The restrictions acted as a hothouse for the impacts from the fires, increasing communities' sense of isolation and trauma, and reducing emotional resilience and financial resources. They also constrained the ability of people to participate in important rituals such as births and funerals, and faith practitioner's ability to be able to assist or offer comfort or support to those affected by bushfires or suffering grief.

*The first funeral I did you were only allowed to have ten people. It was just so hard. The message I was giving, or people may have received, was I didn't care, because I wasn't allowed to give them a hug or touch them, I imagine.*

However, these events also stripped back the veneer of communities, revealing what really underpinned their social fabric and was seen as of most value. Attributes such as generosity and kindness were considered the most important for recovery across all communities and these were also strongly associated with resilience. Volunteering was central to not only the communities themselves, but the local economy. Much of this was perceived

“It was often the small things and the detail of care that created strength. Things such as knowing the families who were going to receive the care packages and tailoring them to specific family's needs or the ability to be able to sit and listen to others – knowing what to say to and when to say it.”

as secondary to tangible strengths such as physical infrastructure in formal planning approaches.

People who are connected into their communities were also crucial in identifying where local resources were, what help might be needed and how it could be delivered. For example, the Sikh community provided free food through a local neighbourhood house during the fires, another faith group fed and cared for their local asylum seekers and made sure they were communicated with. A local pastor provided support to his community members through helping them with cleaning up their properties and mending fences. Groups associated with faith communities and church halls were also an important focus for social connection and activities in some communities.

It was often the small things and the detail of care that created strength. Things such as knowing the families who were going to receive the care packages and tailoring them to specific family's needs or the ability to be able to sit and listen to others – knowing what to say to and when to say it.

*It is someone saying “How is it for you?” ... someone listening to them. But for others, it might be saying “Can you write down for me how this is?”*

Although the restrictions made pastoral care in the community and schools more difficult to provide, there was a broadening out of virtual networks in some faith communities. Others found creative ways to engage with their communities. One group organised an online fashion show and meditation and another an art competition in the local church hall. Maintaining hope in the community was seen as critical.

Ritual and process are interwoven in our lives from the moment we are born. However, the importance of their purpose in helping communities navigate threshold moments has been something that has always been assumed rather than fully understood. The arts, faith, culturally diverse and Aboriginal communities have specific capabilities in these areas, which can provide pathways for those navigating difficult emotional landscapes. Each context may be different but at their core are processes that help to make sense of what is incomprehensible and enable healing through compassion and care.

The aim of our research was to provide a starting

point for evaluating Gippsland community strengths and capabilities, in terms of their recovery. Our aim is to continue to explore these in collaboration with communities to support better inclusion of these in regional and emergency management planning.

The Black Summer fires showed us the nakedness of humanity in the face of disaster. It has also shown how strengths manifest in these communities and that what you can't see from the outside and don't know is often what really matters. It has also shown that we all need to learn to listen more carefully if we are to hear these communities and see their richness through their eyes rather than through our own assumptions.

Celeste Young is Research Fellow, Institute of Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities at Victoria University. The Growing the Seeds report from these conversations can be accessed at [www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/growing-the-seeds.pdf](http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/growing-the-seeds.pdf)



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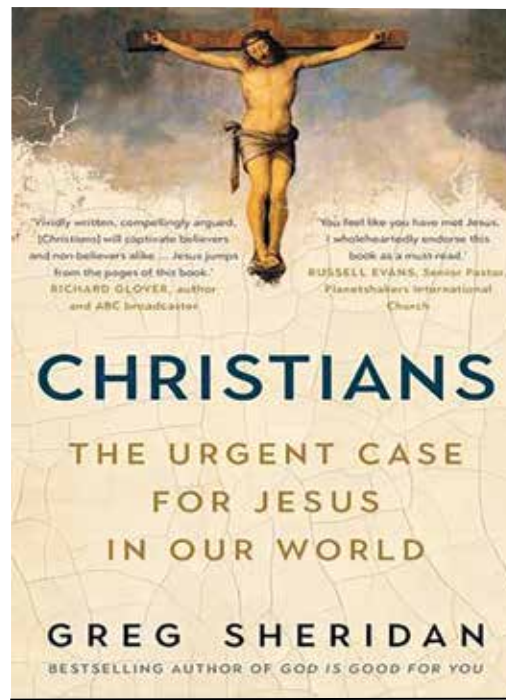
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# CHRISTIANS

## THE URGENT CASE FOR JESUS IN OUR WORLD

by Greg Sheridan  
Allen & Unwin, 2021



Richard Prideaux

Australian foreign affairs journalist Greg Sheridan's second book on Christianity follows after his very popular *God Is Good for You* (2018).

*Christians* is a book of two quite different parts. Part 1 contains a reinterpretation of the New Testament account of the life and activities of Jesus with a spirited defence of the historicity of the New Testament. Drawing on recently published work by John Dickson (*Is Jesus History?*) and Richard Bauckham (*Jesus and the Eye Witnesses*), along with that of other recent scholars, Sheridan mounts a coherent and well-documented defence of the historicity of the gospel accounts of Jesus' life.

This defence includes a rebuttal of the mid-20th century liberal and rather tired theological narrative regarding the late dating and general unreliability of the New Testament documents. Part 1 also contains useful and energising chapters on the life of Mary, the doctrine of angels and the life of Paul the Apostle, whom Sheridan describes as "Christ's Lenin" in terms of his impact on the growth of Christianity. What immediately comes across to the reader is Sheridan's excitement about his faith, about the Bible and about the impact of Jesus on the lives of the people he writes about.

In my opinion, Sheridan argues convincingly that disbelief in the story of

Jesus cannot be based on data. The literary, archaeological and historical evidence is simply too strong. On the other hand, Sheridan reminds readers that "Christians must be clear about the limits of historical evidence. History certainly does not prove that Jesus was God and that

he rose from the dead." His conclusion is that "It is reasonable to believe in God and reasonable not to believe in God." At the same time Sheridan rightly takes aim at the idea, often supported in the daily media, that science has taken a stance against God. He concludes "this is profoundly and extravagantly untrue." In this introduction he concludes, I think rightly, that "Most of the things we believe in life are reasonable but not proven."

Sheridan spends some time on the fact that it is only the developed Western world that has given up on Christianity. He notes that Christianity is an increasingly powerful influence on the lives of millions in Asia, including China, South America and Africa, and sadly proclaims that "The West is a culture willing itself into amnesia and ignorance!" Noting that Australian culture "has become more credulous about everything but Christianity," Sheridan quotes Chesterton's observation that "when you

stop believing in Christianity you don't believe in nothing, you believe in everything!"

Part 2 of this book is entitled *Christians and their New Worlds*, and here Sheridan talks about "smuggling Christ into popular culture." He covers writers who embed Christian faith in their work: Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead* and Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* alongside Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh and Dostoyevski, amongst others. Sheridan also notes television productions such as *Jane the Virgin*, addressing American Latino Christian values and morality, and the American cop show *Blue Bloods*, which has a Catholic New York police chief as its hero.

The remainder of part 2 provides backgrounded accounts of some remarkable Australian Christians of many denominations who have literally changed the lives of thousands of others through their activities governed by their faith. These include missionaries, business leaders, politicians, army officers, Chinese Christian leaders, and one or two archbishops.

This book is a substantial read but it's worth persisting. Sheridan is a major public figure in Australian media and indeed worldwide. His authority in the area of international relations is beyond dispute. For him to 'come out' with his lifelong faith in Christ was a big step, I am sure, for him. But this book is also impossible to put down due to Sheridan's breezy and personal style. He is excited about his faith and he calls us to be excited about ours. Five stars!

Janet Wallis

This book is a delightful analysis of our knowledge of Jesus from ancient sources leading to the conclusion stated in the title of the book, that Jesus is needed in our world. Greg Sheridan takes time to clearly state his understanding of who Jesus is, and how that is justified by looking at the biblical writings and a wide array of commentaries or comments about Jesus, which aid our understanding of Jesus' person and work.

Sheridan uses the analytical tool of his journalist background to weigh up a great variety of viewpoints, and authors. He does not dismiss scholarship, but affirms there is great value and worth in knowing the original text of the Bible itself, specifically the gospels, as a source of the story of the historical Jesus.

From his very first word, Sheridan captured my interest and imagination. He writes about Jesus from a deep knowledge of the scriptures and a keen interest in how he is perceived in our community.

This book is written with Christians and non-believers in mind. Sheridan aims to overlay some of the commonly held misconceptions about Jesus with carefully researched information. He speaks of theories that have sought to discredit the biblical account, rejecting them in favour of the eyewitness accounts of the biblical authors.

Step by step, Sheridan reminds us that Jesus has a primary place in the history of our society and of the world. For example, our dating system, even if not quite accurate, is based on the time of Jesus' birth,

because this was considered the most important date in history.

He considers Jesus' death and resurrection and his influence both in his own time and in the two millennia since then. He looks at the presentation of the person of Jesus from a variety of perspectives, including that of John the Apostle; and Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Sheridan states quite clearly, "I believe the Gospels are true and I believe they are inspired. But they did not float down from heaven in completed form. The work of God in the world has to be carried out by flesh-and-blood men and women, even the best of them, like the apostles, fallible and uncertain."

The book is steeped in references to modern culture, like movies, books and TV shows, as well as recognition of the effects of COVID 19. This is a book aimed to speak to people today, about the relevance of faith, specifically faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God and of the beneficial influence of the Christian faith, through the ages and potentially today.

Sheridan looks realistically at particular Christians of influence today, and commends the difference they have made to society through their self-sacrifice and service to the poor, the diseased and the outcast. He looks at political figures both in Australia and overseas. He concludes Christians have made a difference because of the Jesus they know and follow. By these stories of real people, in real time, he concludes Christians are needed as conveyors of the Jesus the world needs to know and be influenced by.

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Photo: Bunyip News

### Bethlehem Spoonville at St Philip's

From 11 December  
Children of all ages are invited to contribute a decorated wooden spoon character to the Spoonville installation in the grounds of St Philip's Cowes.

This themed Spoonville aims to celebrate the original Christmas story and be a point of community connection as we emerge from yet another period of isolation.

Spoons can be brought along and 'planted' anytime from Saturday 11 December onwards.

### Thomas A'Beckett's feast day

Sunday 28 December  
11 am Eucharist with lunch to follow.

Drawing on TS Eliot's  
*Murder in the Cathedral*  
in the Eucharist.

St Thomas' Bunyip, A'Beckett Rd, Bunyip  
Lunch bookings to Raelene: (03) 9793 2215

### Scripture Union summer program

SUFMs, Theos and KidsGames,  
and Camp Coolamatong.  
Various locations and dates.  
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### Drouin Anglican Church Socialites dinner

6 pm, first Saturday of each month.  
For a lovely meal out and fellowship  
with others.  
Bookings to Peter: 0438 380 126

# Witnessing the spring

## Rev'd Ken Parker

Back in July, three of our Bunyip parishioners were booked in to the beautiful Santa Casa Retreat House at Queenscliff. Red Hill parish runs an annual retreat there, but COVID put paid to this year's endeavour. I suggested that I would offer an in-parish retreat at Bunyip for them and others who were interested, and we made a date. We then made a few more dates and it eventually happened in mid-November, when we met from Tuesday until Thursday at St Thomas' Bunyip.

We stood in a good tradition here, because we have photographic records of a Gippsland clergy retreat taking place in St Thomas' hall about 100 years ago.

Unlike those retreat-goers, we did not sleep in the hall, but at home or in the comfortable cabins behind the Garfield Picture Theatre. We used the church for morning and evening prayer and for the daily Eucharist and we had discussions in the hall.

Raelene fed us on the first night and on the other two we feasted in the Garfield Hotel. Writer and psychologist Steve Biddulph's stunning new book *Fully Human* provided our morning study and discussion material. We worked solidly with his challenging thoughts and are changed by them. By contrast, in the afternoon sessions we sat with Quaker poet Clive Sansom's poetry in *The Witnesses*, as we sought to place ourselves in the shoes of

those who witnessed the life and death and ministry of Jesus. This, too, was very moving.

At the midday Eucharist, various people shared their testimonies of their faith journeys. At our final afternoon session I asked folk to write their own poem celebrating their faith journey. The end result was startling – and, like the Biddulph book and Sansom's verse, life-giving. Here is Paul Davine's contribution, published with permission.



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## Encounter with Christ

by Paul Davine

*In sacred stillness with the Bread  
and Wine*

*I close my eyes*

*And drift*

*To holy space within*

*Where God dwells.*

*And with the taking of Christ's  
precious body,*

*Broken for me*

*And precious blood*

*Poured out for me,*

*I, the taker, become  
the taken*

*Of my Risen Lord,*

*Immersed in sweet embrace*

*Of Love itself.*

*No words are spoken,  
nor needed*

*No sight or touch*

*But Love's embrace,*

*And peace.*