

The Gippsland Anglican

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Photo: Nik Photography

A group of travellers from Melbourne joined the Easter Day celebrations at Holy Trinity Yarram

Easter 2021

Renewing ecumenical fellowship

Glenda Amos

We were blessed to have Bishop Richard at our three churches for the Good Friday ecumenical service at Christ Church Tarraville and Easter Day services at St John's Port Albert and Holy Trinity Yarram. It was a joy to be able to gather together this year after being unable to attend Easter services in our churches last year.

The ecumenical service at Tarraville includes members of all district communities as

well as visitors to the area. Although the Anglican parish is instrumental in preparing this service, members of all Yarram churches participate in the reading of the Passion from the Gospel of St John. About 80 people attended this year's service, sitting inside and outside Christ Church. Bishop Richard's message looked at the different perspectives of the many stories in the Old Testament in which God brings light from darkness and new life from what seem to be 'dead ends'.

Like the women at the tomb, we need to 'stand under' these stories in order to 'understand' their meaning.

Many visitors joined our Easter Day services at St John's and Holy Trinity. At St John's our new neighbours eagerly waited for the bell to call us to worship and joined us as we gathered in worship and renewed our baptismal vows.

At Holy Trinity, we were able to utilise the Narthex to extend the body of the church and accommodate seating for all our visitors.

We even had a magpie fly into the church and join our service. He was quite taken with our singing and listened intently during the quieter times. The church was decorated with gold as well as prayer points from our Palm Sunday service and meditation during Holy Week.

Apart from renewing our own baptismal vows at Holy Trinity, we were witness to the baptism and confirmation of Taylah. A special dance, performed by Anya, for Taylah was a part

of our service as well. We also welcomed Jess and Gus MacAulay officially into the Anglican Communion. They and their children are regular worshippers at Holy Trinity.

Bishop Richard preached about our cross, and especially through the eyes of Nicodemus.

Bishop Richard and the Rev'd Jenny Wicking managed a safe serving of Communion to all in attendance. A magnificent PowerPoint presentation of the hymn *How Great Thou Art* ended our service.

GIPPSLAND DIOCESE
VACANCIES

Drouin
Trafalgar
Traralgon

‘Re-wilding’ the church?

‘Re-wilding’ is a term gaining currency in a number of fields. In farming and agriculture circles it refers to practices that pull back – more or less radically – from the intensive use of fertilisers, pesticides and hormones to increase yield. The underlying principle is that of working with nature for the good of nature and, ultimately, for the long-term benefits that flow from greater sustainability and biodiversity. A quick internet search will reveal the many different organisations and movements in Australia and abroad that have applied the language and conceptual framework of re-wilding to their mission.

Canon Robert Warren, sometime National Evangelism Officer for the Church of England, has asked whether the church needs its own version of re-wilding. “Re-wilding the church,” he suggests in a recent article, “is about re-discovering how to work with God for the good of the church and the world.” This involves recapturing the church’s relational character, as a community open to God rather than “a religious organisation run within a secular mind-set.”

The life of the local church is the heartbeat of the Church

catholic, or universal. In our Anglican way of being church, the diocese as the basic geographical ‘unit’ is organised in such a way that the spiritual leadership of its bishop and the temporal governance of its councils can support, nurture and encourage the flourishing of local faith communities: parishes, schools, chaplaincies, ministry centres and mission initiatives.

Sometimes Anglicans speak of ‘the Diocese’ as though it were a separate entity from their local ministry setting. This may be a convenient way of differentiating between the church as it operates locally and the wider church that authorises and facilitates local ministry. Yet it’s a distinction that can set up a duality that makes no sense in an Anglican polity. For ‘the Diocese’ is, of course, all of us together in service of the world God loves.

Here, perhaps, the notion of ‘subsidiarity’ may be helpful. Well known in the field of political science, this concept has its origins in Roman Catholic social teaching from the late 19th century. It is derived from the Latin subsidio, ‘to aid or to help’, from which we also get words like ‘subsidise’.



Subsidiarity refers to the principle that central structures exist to perform those roles and tasks that cannot be easily done, or would be needlessly replicated, at a more local level. As such, it is entirely consistent with our Anglican ethos of ‘decentralisation’ and an understanding of authority that is dispersed, just as our population in Gippsland is dispersed.

Decentralisation and dispersed authority are not, however, instincts that put the ‘centre’ and the ‘edges’ of any organisation – be they political, social or ecclesial – in competition, or which champion the needs of one at the expense of the other. On the contrary, these expressions of our catholicity as Anglican Christians remind us that the centre exists to serve the edges; indeed, one

could say the centre only exists at the edges, just as the Church universal only exists where local church is present and active.

As we approach the third and final session of our 39th Synod, these dynamics are important. The vision we set and decisions we make as a diocesan family must contribute to the vitality of our ministry centres, which are embedded in their local communities – to the re-wilding of our diocese, as it were.

That might involve changing some of our practices: understanding the importance of diversity (or inclusiveness, we Anglicans might say) to sustainability; thinking of mission “not so much as a way of recruiting new members but rather giving expression to our calling to enhance the lives of others” (Warren); and recalibrating ‘yield’ in terms of the distinctive quality of our witness to the kingdom rather than the short-term quantity of growth.

May our baptismal ministries, lay or ordained, be renewed – even re-wilded – by the Risen Christ in this great Easter season.

+RWT

Prayer Diary: around the parishes

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



KORUMBURRA–
POOWONG

To Christians, the cross is a test of faith, it is a symbol of forgiveness, it is the gift of redemption – but most importantly, it reminds us that God sacrificed his only son so that we may live.

Jesus was well aware of his destiny. He knew he would suffer – there were no special deals from the father. The pain and suffering would be extreme and would be his alone – a burden he carried for us.

We ask Lord, that you instill in us strength and courage to accept fully, in our hearts and minds, our understanding of your sacrifice. We ask that our faith be unwielding in our daily lives and that we bear witness of this to those around us.

We look to the cross. We thank you and accept the wonderful gifts given to us through your sacrifice.

These things we ask Lord in your name. Amen.

(Prayer from Good Friday combined services at the Crosses, 2021)

LAKES ENTRANCE
AND METUNG

Pray and give thanks for:

faithful and adventurous disciples



an effective communal witness to Christ in Lakes Entrance and Metung

more Baby Boomers and Gen X members

prospering community connections

new people joining our Lakes congregation

LEONGATHA

Pray that:

numerical growth continues in all areas within the parish

the Wednesday Service and Community Lunch will grow, bringing individual hope and transformation demonstrating the kingdom of God

ARDFA supporting bushfire and global relief efforts

Lucy Lim

Last year began with Australia in the midst of a national disaster. Bushfires continued to burn into March. By then, the world was grappling with a new crisis, the COVID pandemic, bringing great hardship to many, and especially for people in countries with limited resources to protect themselves from the virus and its economic ramifications.

As Christians, we should not be surprised that creation groans in eager expectation. Instead, even as we wait for Jesus to bring in the new heavens and earth, we have been given the responsibility and opportunity to bring hope and healing into his world. It is in this context that Anglican Relief and Development Fund of Australia (ARDFA) partners with Christians and acts as an agent for churches to bring aid and relief in the name of Jesus Christ to many parts of the world.

Partnering with ARDFA empowers the local church to strengthen their communities for the Gospel's sake.

- the seven people baptised in recent weeks will mature in their faith
- three recently authorised Lay Readers develop their ministries
- five congregational members currently in discernment for ordination pursue their studies diligently
- there will be growth and impact of the new tween group gathering 10–14 year olds
- each member of the parish will develop to the fullness of their created potential, which is the vision of the parish for this year



COVID food security support to people in Nepal

Through the generosity of Christians, ARDFA was able to raise \$158,000 in supporting bushfire recovery. We are thankful for the opportunity to work with Anglican churches, dioceses and schools across Australia to fund these efforts. It has been a privilege to partner with the Gippsland Diocese in supporting the work of the Rev'd Cathy Turnbull as a dedicated Missional Deacon for the Gippsland Bushfire Recovery work. As well as giving practical and material assistance, Cathy provides much-needed pastoral and spiritual support to those who are struggling. The strain of rebuilding and the slowness of the process mean that many are still homeless, so that even those who were coping well are now exhausted and dispirited.

With COVID restrictions easing, Cathy and her colleagues are hoping to provide community spaces where people can gather and find fellowship. Please pray for Cathy as she begins this initiative and ministers with other clergy alongside those impacted by the bushfires. Pray that they may bring healing, and for those who come to find grace and peace in Jesus.

Galatians 6:10 reminds us to "do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." But how can we do that well,

from our corner of the world? ARDFA exists to do just that, in partnership with Christians and churches in Australia.

Supporters of ARDFA projects become part of a three-way partnership to further God's work in other parts of the world. ARDFA partners with in-country churches to deliver strategic and effective aid and relief in their own communities. Our projects are locally initiated and operated to reduce overheads, ensure cultural acceptance and promote sustainability. Whether buying goats for the wives of clergy in Uganda, or putting roofs on churches in Tanzania, or supporting a community

plantation for displaced Karen people in Myanmar, we focus on strengthening the holistic work of the church in their communities.

Many of our projects are strategically chosen to equip and strengthen the church. One case in point is our sponsorship of eight students from the various dioceses in Papua New Guinea to complete a three-year course in ministry and development. In Tanzania, we are helping a diocese to move towards financial sustainability through dairy farming.

Our aim is to demonstrate the love of Christ and spread the Gospel by helping the poor and needy. We believe

that Jesus' Great Commission (to make disciples in Jesus' name) goes hand in hand with the Great Commandment (to love God and others). We praise God that in Nepal, for example, where COVID-19 has left many destitute and thousands have suicided in desperation, our distribution of emergency provisions through the Anglican Church in Nepal has led many to find hope in Christ.

ARDFA is part of a global Anglican aid and development network serving the world. ARDF can also be found in the USA, Canada, Kenya, Egypt. Our global trustees include Anglican Primates from the Global South. Working within a wide network of Christian partners means that we can be responsive to the world's needs. Praise God that we have been able to help our brothers and sisters in many parts of the world during the pandemic. Our most recent projects also include emergency assistance to Fiji (cyclones), South Sudan (flood), and DR Congo (internally displaced victims of conflicts).

All this is only possible as Christians support and pray for our work. ARDFA has launched the Western Australia Cyclone Recovery Appeal to distribute relief through affected churches. For more information, please visit www.ardfa.org.au or email executive@ardfa.org.au.

Lucy Lim is Executive Director of ARDFA.



Photo: Anglican Church of North West Australia

Kalbarri Anglican Church after Cyclone Seroja

Golden opportunity in Walhalla

Julie Bruce

In 2014, a service in Walhalla, the historic goldfields town north of Moe, was but a thought in the mind of Rev'd Canon Hugh and his wife, Dr Dorothy Prentice, when they holidayed in the township and explored this beautiful part of Gippsland. Hugh wondered at the time whether it would be possible to conduct a service at a later date in the picturesque, historic, century-old St John's Anglican Church with its stunning view overlooking the town. In recent times, the church has been available for weddings and baptisms, but on the fifth Sunday in Lent 2021, some seven years later, Hugh's passing thought for a Sunday service of Holy Communion became a reality.

After consultation with and encouragement from Bishop Richard and the Rector of Moe-Newborough, Hugh and Dorothy personally invited people to attend this service.



St John's Anglican Church, Walhalla

As the old St John's bell pealed across the valley, 12 people climbed the staircase to the church touched by the gentle tumble of autumn leaves and fine showers of misty rain.

Hugh and Dorothy introduced themselves as former CMS missionaries who had lived for many years in Africa in Tanzania and Namibia, Hugh involved with church leadership training and Dorothy attending patients as a medical practitioner. In his address at Walhalla, Hugh aligned the history of the town's golden past with the inestimable value of the

precepts of the Lord, them being finer than much fine gold. As part of his sermon, Hugh said:

In General Revelation, God works through His creation, as the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans chapter 1(19-20): "what may be known about God is plain to people, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made."

Bear that in mind as you consider the beauty of God's

creation around Walhalla, and the very special beauty of all the gold that God created here, and guided Ned Stringer and his party of prospectors to find it in 1862. Ned died the next year, before the gold had brought fabulous wealth to those who mined it and sold it. And gold provides a very apt symbol of the value of God's revelation to us. Look at the stained glass window in the sanctuary: you can see the cross of our Lord Jesus at the top, reminding us of how He atoned for our sins; then there is Walhalla's valley; and at the bottom of the window is a prospector's pan full of gold.

What is more precious than gold? Let's learn from God:

"The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever.

The decrees of the Lord

are firm, and all of them are righteous.

They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb."
(Psalm 19:7-10)

Prayers for the people followed and then an invitation was extended to those of the faith to share the Eucharist according to pandemic principles.

After some commemorative photographs, refreshments followed in a local cafe before Hugh and Dorothy continued on their way. Our thanks go to God and to Hugh and Dorothy for their vision and desire to conduct this service in the historic town of Walhalla.

The 100-year-old St John's Church accommodates up to 40 people in non-COVID times and is available for baptisms and weddings by arrangement.

Contact the Rev'd Sathi Anthony, Rector of Moe-Newborough Anglican Church, 0400 248 347, or the secretary Jan Misiurka, 0475 067 145.



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Housing, health and wellbeing

Jane Anderson

It is a pleasure to provide this update to the Gippsland Anglican community as my office reflects on activities of the most recent quarter.

Over the past 12 months I have heard people express views for and against the used lead acid battery (ULAB) plant. Communities want to be informed about industrial developments like this. People want to know about potential health and environmental risks, and they are seeking reassurance from the government and industry that their health and wellbeing will be protected.

Chunxing Corporation recently announced it had established a ULAB Community Liaison Committee (CLC). The CLC comprises a variety of stakeholders, including seven community members. The aim of the CLC is to build understanding and confidence in the operation of the ULAB through the provision of progress updates, information, monitoring data and site tours. Integration of community voice in this way will enable ongoing consultation and allow the people of Latrobe to have their health concerns and aspirations heard and considered.

I recently made a submission to the 10-Year Social and Affordable

Housing Strategy in Victoria. Last year my office engaged extensively with people experiencing financial stress in Latrobe. People told me it was vital all the social determinants of health be considered when working towards the provision of social and affordable housing. I heard that having a safe place to call home was key, but other determinants such as access to local amenities and services that empower people to achieve their own health and wellbeing aspirations were also vital. All these insights, and more, helped shape my submission to the strategy.

As part of my 2020/21 Statement of Intent, I also want to hear from people who are experiencing or have experienced family violence. The aim of these conversations is to:

- design, develop and implement ways of

engaging that support specific communities to participate more fully in systemic change to improve health and wellbeing

- consider that the purpose of engagement and the engagement itself may be different for different cohorts
- focus on community conversations and engagement questions that are specific to the selected cohorts and update the engagement model to reflect communities' experiences and engagement preferences
- analyse community voice in order to determine systemic issues for service innovation and improvements
- advocate to governments, agencies, service providers, businesses, industry, community members and Latrobe Health.

Meetings can take place in a group or on an individual basis, and all conversations with me are strictly confidential.

If you are interested in meeting to share your perspective, please contact Kylie on 1800 319 255 or email info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au

Jane Anderson's role as Latrobe Health Advocate is to provide independent advice to the Victorian Minister for Health on behalf of Latrobe Valley communities on system and policy issues affecting their health and wellbeing.



Latrobe Health Advocate

Criminal Justice Sunday: reflecting on restoration

Cathrine Muston

It's been more than 12 months since I've been in prison, and I can't wait to go back.

When the pandemic hit in early 2020, some of the first places to lock down were our prisons and correctional centres. Overnight, visitors to prisons and those providing education courses and activities were unable to enter, and Anglicare Victoria's ParentZone program had to suspend its very popular Being a Dad program. Fortunately, our chaplains, Heather and Dee, were able to continue to visit individual prisoners for most of that time.

While face-to-face visits with family and friends were also suspended for prisoners during the lockdown, they were replaced with video calls and to many that was a refreshing change. However, the pandemic restrictions have also shown us that there is still nothing quite like meeting our loved ones face to face.

As Criminal Justice Sunday

arrives in each Diocese across the province on Sunday, 2 May, it is important that we continue to uphold in prayer those who are imprisoned and those who work in prisons, particularly our chaplains. For families of prisoners dealing with changes to circumstances it can feel like they serve a sentence as well. It can be a time of financial pressures and emotional strain, of days spent travelling to the prison for visits and, if there are children involved, the added burden of helping them to understand what has happened to mum or dad.

On Criminal Justice Sunday, we can reflect on what restoration means in our criminal justice system and consider how we can support people who have been in prison, along with their families. Prison is not a happy place to be, but for many it provides the space to reflect on the choices they have made and to consider how they can change on release.

So, as we gather on

Criminal Justice Sunday, it is good to pray for a justice that seeks to transform broken lives and bring healing and wholeness, and to consider how we, as the Church of God, can contribute to that.

Prayer for prisoners and prison chaplains, Criminal Justice Sunday 2021

God of love and comfort,

Please be with those in prison at this time. Help them to maintain their health and wellbeing despite the added restrictions they face.

Help them to use the time in prison to reflect on their circumstances and resolve to make changes.

Be with prison chaplains as they meet and minister to those behind prison walls.

We pray that you will strengthen and encourage our chaplains in the work they do in listening, caring and in sharing your gospel.

May your Holy Spirit bless and comfort those who seek to know and follow you in such a difficult place.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.



Anglicare Victoria CEO, Paul McDonald

Anglicare Victoria CEO recognised for dedication to improving lives of vulnerable youth

Anglicare Victoria has congratulated its CEO, Paul McDonald, after he was recognised in the 2021 Pro Bono Impact 25 Awards for his years of dedication to improving the lives of vulnerable young people through the national Home Stretch campaign.

After a year in which the Andrews government in Victoria adopted the Home Stretch reforms in full and most other states and territories have adopted or committed to them, Paul won the Pro Bono Judges' Choice award for Influence, as well as being named as one of the top 25 Australians working for social change over the last 12 months.

Courtesy Anglicare Victoria

Bolo farm chapel

Tim Green

We recently pulled the caravan out of the shed and headed off to what we hoped would be a restful few days at Lake Cargelligo in western New South Wales, only to be subjected to the weather coming in from the east coast. Never mind, we survived.

If you are travelling in that direction, or up to Condobolin, take time out to visit the Bolo farm chapel; it's well worth the drive.

Titled Christ the King, the building was completed in early 2008 and blessed by Archbishop Christopher Prowse in July of that year.

The building is circular in shape, the upper level being the sacred space and the lower level the home of the resident who takes care of the property.

The idea to create such a space came from the farm's owners, who had experience of a similar church near their family home in Austria. The circular design represents eternity, with a bronze cross on the roof symbolising redemption through Jesus Christ. The interior of the domed roof is adorned with a beautiful fresco representing the universe and Christ the King. The acoustics under this decorated dome are amazing. When we were

there, singing a hymn quietly was akin to a choir performing in a cathedral.

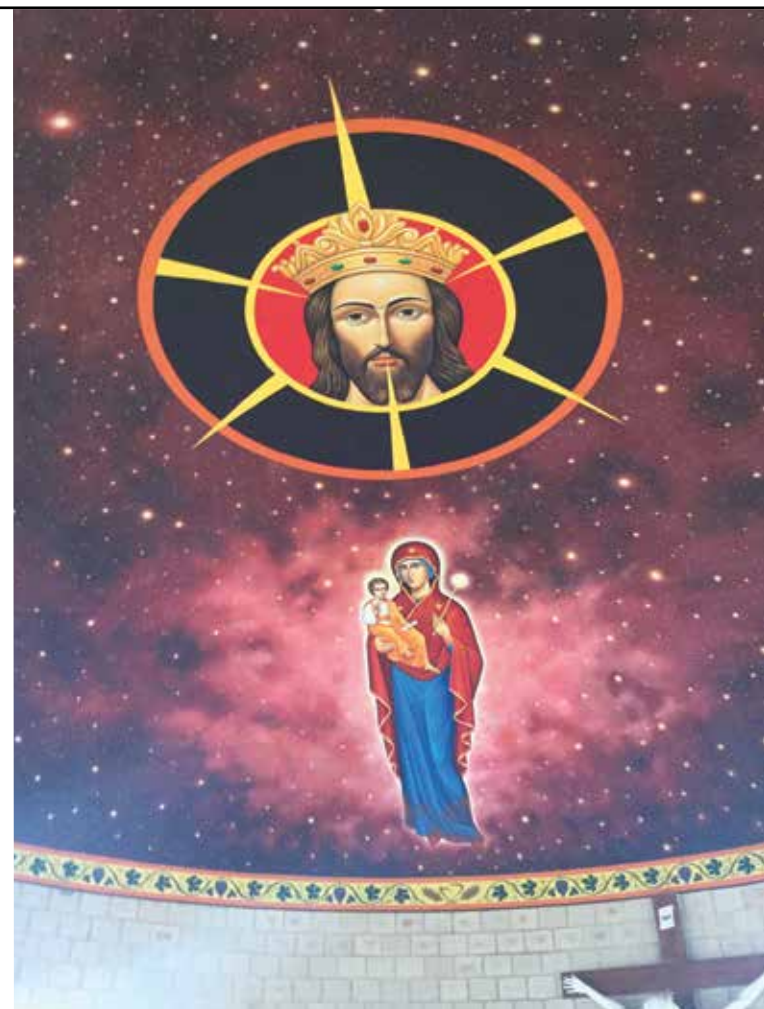
The altar is beautiful sandstone, heavy and solid in appearance, and a silver and gold aumbry contains the Reserved Sacrament. Around the walls, both inside and out, are the most skilfully executed mosaics depicting Christ and Saint Joseph with baby Jesus, and Saint Nicholas.

Services are conducted in the church twice a month and visitors are most welcome.

If you have the time and the inclination, go and visit the Mount Bolo Farm Chapel – you will not be disappointed.

Care to share a special snapshot and faith story from your travels?

Contact the Editor (editor@gippsanglican.org.au).



The interior of the domed roof of Bolo farm chapel

Across the ages

Bushfire inspires winning story

Phoebe Worseldine from Mossiface near Bruthen won the 2020 Australian Christian Teen Writer Award for her story *Through Smoke and Flames*.

Phoebe's portrayal of a devastating bushfire through the eyes of a child is set in a convincing landscape of suspense and desperation. Will Jasmine's trust in God's faithfulness survive the furnace of fear and disappointment?

This is an encouraging and hopeful story for everyone who doubts and quails while waiting for "the wind to change".

Entries for the 2021 Australian Christian Teen Writer Award close on 31 May 2021. First prize in the Australian Christian Teen Writer Award is \$1000.

Extracts from winning works, conditions and an entry form are available at the SparkLit website: www.sparklit.org/awards/australian-christian-teen-writer-award.

Courtesy SparkLit



2020 Australian Christian Teen Writer Award winner, Phoebe Worseldine

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Conversion: has it really been outlawed?

Mark Woods

In February of this year, Royal Assent was given to a law passed by the Victorian Parliament early in the month that made certain consequences of some religious practices criminal offences. The Victorian *Change or Suppression (Conversion) Practices Prohibition Act 2021* is a controversial piece of legislation that has polarised community debate.

Much like the Victorian Parliament's passage of euthanasia law reform, or the legislative attempt to break the seal of the confessional where certain crimes are confessed by the penitent, there seem to be only two sides to the public discourse.

On the one hand has been the Victorian Government's view:

- Conversion practices are a barbaric interference in an individual's life where they do not consent to it, and an outmoded superstitious con, with no scientific efficacy, where they do.
- Lives have been ruined by long-term trauma experienced by those who have been the subject of such practices in the past.
- Members of the LGBTIQ+ community are disproportionately affected by the practices, and their suffering of adverse mental health outcomes amounts to serious injury that requires denunciation by the Parliament.

The opposing view goes like this:

- The law represents an unwarranted and unacceptable affront to freedom of religion and is contrary to the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Victorian Charter of Human Rights) which

is supposed to ensure that freedom.

- Any deliberate and indefensible conduct that causes injury to another is a criminal offence already – so the law is unnecessary.
- The law is breath-taking in its overreach, potentially branding loving parents counselling children as perpetrators of family violence, bona fide preachers of the scriptures as worthy of “denunciation” and a betrayal of the culture and traditions of modern Australia.

The proposed draft Bill raised serious concerns among respected organisations such as the Victorian branch of the Australian Medical Association, the Law Institute of Victoria and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, which all called for significant amendments. Those legal and health concerns were echoed and expanded upon by faith leaders of all major religious groups in the state. The Bill passed unamended.

The Victorian premier, the Hon Daniel Andrews MP, in response to the some statements by the latter group, said, “Some faith leaders have been critical of a law to ban the worst form of bigoted quackery imaginable. This is not kindness and love or the protection of a vulnerable and persecuted group. This is not something to be proud of.”

So what does the law actually do?

Among other things, the law:

- generally prohibits change or suppression practices
- makes it a criminal offence for a person or organisation to intentionally engage in change or suppression practice or conduct which negligently causes injury; or to take a person from Victoria to undergo such a practice; or to advertise such a practice

- empowers the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission to receive and respond to reports about change or suppression practices, and to investigate them, and to direct a person or organisation to take action to comply with the law.

The law defines a change or suppression practice as conduct directed towards a person on the basis of that person's sexual orientation or gender identity for the purpose of changing or suppressing that person's orientation or identity. It is prohibited whether or not

“... people of faith in general, and churches (and their ordained and lay leaders) in particular, should take the time to familiarise themselves with the law, and consider whether they need to review their current conduct and practices in light of it.”

the person has requested the practice or consented to it.

The practice or conduct outlawed includes psychiatry or psychotherapy treatment, as well as religious practices including prayer-based practices, deliverance practices or exorcisms – or giving a person a referral (even at the person's request) for the purpose of empowering a person to participate in such a practice.

The flip side of this definition is that permitted practices or conduct include those that assist a person to undergo a gender transition, or express their gender identity, provide acceptance or support or understanding of a person, or facilitates a person's coping skills, social support or identity exploration.

The Explanatory Memorandum released with the proposed law noted that it was “intended to capture a broad range of conduct including informal practices, such as conversations with a leader that encourage

change or suppression of sexual orientation or gender identity, and more formal practices, such as behaviour change programs and residential camps”.

However, the Statement of Compatibility accompanying the proposed law (a legal requirement to confirm that a proposed law is compatible with the Victorian Charter of Human Rights) stated:

Although broad, the definition has been carefully designed to exclude conduct that is not directed at an individual to reduce its impact on religious practices such as sermons. It also requires conduct to be engaged in for the purpose of changing or suppressing a person's sexual orientation or gender identity ... to limit impact upon general discussions of religious beliefs

around sexual orientation or gender identity that aim to explain these beliefs and not change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.


One uncontroversial thing that can be said is that the law enters uncharted legal waters for Victorians. This has allowed the sometimes temerarious, and frequently histrionic, criticism of the law to invade the public discourse.

On social and other media, images and descriptions abound of clerics being dragged by the stole from their pulpit after delivering sermons based upon Leviticus 18:22 (or Romans 1:26), parents receiving knocks at the door and demands from Commission bureaucrats for copies of emails referring troubled teenagers to counsellors for “assistance” with their child's “anxiety”, through to faith organisations being required to undergo “re-education”.

Supporters of the law scoff at these peddlers of the *reductio ad absurdum* theories.

The law will not commence to operate until early next year, while the Commission prepares for its implementation. Irrespective of the doomsayers, or the balm-applying soothsayers, people of faith in general, and churches (and their ordained and lay leaders) in particular, should take the time to familiarise themselves with the law, and consider whether they need to review their current conduct and practices in light of it.

Mark Woods is a Gippsland lawyer, Chairman of Committees of the Synod of the Gippsland Diocese and, among a variety of roles, is Chair of the Access to Justice Committee of the International Bar Association. The views expressed are his own.



Our commitment to a Safe Church

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

We are committed to ensuring all people in contact with the Church can participate in a safe and responsible environment.

If you have been harmed by a church worker, or you know someone who has, please contact Cheryl Russell, Director of Professional Standards, for a confidential discussion.

Contact: 03 5633 1573, 0407 563 313, cherylrussell1@bigpond.com

To find out more about Safe Church, and about Safe Ministry resources, visit www.gippsanglican.org.au/safe-church.



Photo: Sun and Moon Photography

Members of the Youth PoWR committee

Building bridges between believers

Rev'd Dr Patrick McInerney

The Sydney Statement: Building Bridges Between Believers from Different Religions is an Australian interfaith charter. It is inspired by similar interfaith statements from other cities, such as *The Athens Declaration* 2015, *The Beirut Declaration* 2017 and *The Washington Declaration* 2018. Like those interfaith statements, *The Sydney Statement* is named after the city where it originated. However, it is relevant to multicultural, multi-religious societies everywhere. Among those interfaith statements, *The Sydney Statement* is unique in that it is led by youth who share their dream for the future.

The Sydney Statement was developed by Youth PoWR (Parliament of the World's Religions), a coalition of young adults from different religions. In 2019, Youth PoWR held four professionally facilitated consultations in the north, south, east and west of Sydney to generate content. Young adults from different faiths met and shared their answers to three questions: What is my lived experience

– good and bad – of being a person of faith in Sydney? What would Sydney be like if it were a place where all people of faith could flourish together? What are the concrete steps to get from the present reality to that ideal? The fruits of their discussions were agreed, shared, collated and prioritised.

In 2020, the project executive matched Youth PoWR's input with Western Sydney University's research on the interfaith statements from other cities. They consulted the Youth PoWR committee and the steering committee on various drafts. When the text was nearing completion, they held an online consultation with the wider Youth PoWR network and with selected religious leaders and theologians. Each round of consultations led to clarifications, refinements and precision. As evidence of the seriousness, inclusiveness and rigour of the process, there were 16 drafts!

Like any 'parliament' that votes on legislation, in October 2020 the members of Youth PoWR voted on the final text of *The Sydney Statement* and authorised its publication.

The Sydney Statement is published on a dedicated website, www.thesydneystatement.org.au,

launched in February, where people of all faiths and worldviews can sign up to its values, principles and commitments for building bridges between believers from different religions.

The website has many resources: the story of *The Sydney Statement*, links to interfaith articles, national and international interfaith websites, plus suggested concrete actions for carrying out the commitments of the statement. There are endorsements from religious, civic and educational leaders. PDF and print versions of explanatory posters and booklets are also available.

Youth PoWR launched *The Sydney Statement* at the Sydney Town Hall on 11 March 2021. The event was attended by leaders and representatives from diverse religious, civic, educational, interfaith and community organisations. Religious and civic leaders and Youth PoWR committee members gave speeches, which were interspersed with cultural performances.

Addressing the interfaith audience at the launch, I quoted Pope Francis (Abu Dhabi, 4 April 2019): "There is no alternative: We either build the future together or

there will not be a future."

Alpha Cheng, in his keynote address, gave moving witness of his determination not to give in to hate after his father was murdered by a misguided Muslim youth: "My ultimate form of defiance against those who seek to tear us apart is to hold strong the values that keep us together – respect, compassion, kindness, solidarity and peace."

Ms Jodi McKay, Leader of the Opposition and Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism, said, "It is incredibly heartening to see young people take the lead on this important initiative. I believe we have a lot to learn from young people and much to take away from the messages in this charter."

The responses by Rabbi Benjamin Elton from The Great Synagogue of Sydney, Rev'd Pravrajika Gayatriprana, president of the Ramakrishna Sarada Vedanta Society of NSW, and Youth PoWR committee members Zubaida Alrubai and Joshua Moses, all affirmed the relevance and importance of *The Sydney Statement* for our times.

The media launch of *The Sydney Statement* was the first major public interfaith gathering since the start of

the COVID pandemic over a year ago. The positive, hope-filled energy of the event lifted the spirits of all who were present.

The Sydney Statement proposes growing interfaith relations in daily life, in joint action on social issues, in getting to know one another better, in sharing spirituality and promoting interreligious dialogue to our own faith communities. The 21st commitment proposes 19 March, the anniversary of the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, as Bridge Day for building bridges between believers from different religions. Putting that commitment into action, on 19 March the staff of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations attended Friday prayers in the mosque. Eid al-Fitr on 12 May and Vesak on 26 May will provide further opportunities to build bridges between believers from different religions.

The Sydney Statement has the potential to transform interfaith relations across Australia. It is a pedagogy, a program, a roadmap for building bridges. It is challenging. It is inspirational. It is a birthing. It is a dream. Thank you, Youth PoWR!

We hope that many people will sign up to *The Sydney Statement* and themselves become a living document, a bridge between believers from different religions made not out of steel but out of flesh-and-blood relationships.

The Sydney Statement is an interfaith initiative of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations, in partnership with Western Sydney University. It is overseen by a steering committee of representatives from different religions and supported by the NSW Government with a COMPACT Grant through Multicultural NSW and underwritten by St Columban's Mission Society.

Patrick McInerney is Director of the Columban Centre for Christian-Muslim Relations.

Pentecost and Cooperating Churches

Rev'd Dr John Batt

I was asked if I would like to contribute an article about how a Cooperating Church celebrated Pentecost. Recently retired and after nearly 10 years at Neerim South Cooperating Parish, I was glad of the opportunity to reminisce. Our Pentecost celebrations mirror many others in Anglican or Uniting Church contexts that use the Lectionary as a basis for their corporate worship.

Pentecost in the parish has been celebrated in various ways over the years. On one occasion a cake was blessed and then enjoyed by all at morning tea to celebrate the birthday of the Christian Church. At another, the sanctuary was filled with red and white balloons (exciting the Swans supporters); at yet another service, we all wore something red. At Pentecost last year, because of COVID restrictions on public church attendance, I sat alone in the church, read the scripture readings and prayed. It was eerily quiet as I celebrated by myself the birth of the church in Acts when the Holy Spirit came in power upon the disciples. It felt more like the Valley of the Dry Bones that Ezekiel was speaking about (Ch 37) rather than the vibrant birth of the Acts Church (Acts 2:1-21). I was reminded that the church building is



just a shelter to keep the saints dry and warm; the real church is the fellowship of believers.

The question each year becomes about how we celebrate a once-off extraordinary event such as Pentecost so that it is fresh and relevant 2000 years later. This challenge is an ongoing one. How to present our Gospel tradition in a culturally appropriate way becomes the challenge of each successive generation as we are guided by the Holy Spirit.

This challenge was made real to me many years ago

in a different church context when I was chatting to a community member. I had formed a strong friendship with her and jokingly challenged her as to whether we might see her at church over Christmas. In a response that was light-hearted but packed quite a punch came a well-considered jibe: "has the Christmas story changed yet?" She then told me her parents had insisted that she attend Sunday School and that she had heard all the biblical stories and knew them all off by heart. I replied, "No, the story is the same."

The lady mischievously retorted, "When you change it, I will come and hear the revised version."

Many may prefer a revisionist Gospel, but the church has remained true to its traditions throughout the centuries. I reflected that Christmas and Pentecost are biblical accounts with a mysterious simplicity and yet elegant sophistication about them that is timeless. Indeed, each and every baptised believer is a testimony that the Christian tradition lives anew each day. As one Christian writer remarked, "Each Christian is a living miracle." Christians are renewed and strengthened on a daily

basis through the ongoing ministry of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And that is what we celebrate at Pentecost: God coming to dwell in all believers through the Holy Spirit as our comforter, strengthener and guide throughout our lives on earth and as a promise of eternal things yet to come. We are also a part of something larger – we enjoy the fellowship of other believers as we worship and serve God together and live out our baptism in the body of Christ the Church.

Rev'd Dr John Batt is recently retired from Neerim South Cooperating Parish.

ABC Radio National's Religion Programs

Frequencies: Bairnsdale – 106.3 FM (3ABC RN) Melbourne – 621 AM (3RN)

Religion and Ethics Report

Andrew West

Wednesday 5:30 pm – repeated: Thursday 5:30 am and Friday 11:00 am

Soul Search

Dr Meredith Lake

Sunday 6:00 pm – repeated: Wednesday 11:00 pm and Thursday 12 noon

God Forbid

James Carleton

Sunday 6:00 am – repeated Sunday 10:00 pm and Monday 9:00 pm

For more details: www.abc.net.au



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David and Deb in The Abbey kitchen, preparing lunch and snacks

Cooking, catering and ministry call

David and Deb Chambers, The Abbey Raymond Island

Rev'd Edie Ashley

In mid-April, the second of the Families Week holidays at The Abbey was offered to east Gippsland families impacted by the Black Summer bushfires.

All accommodation and meals were provided by the Anglican Mothers Union of Australia and we were able to offer this holiday at no cost to our guests. Rev'd Judith Lake was Chaplain, and David and Deb Chambers had agreed to cook for the week as their gift and contribution.

I sat down with David and Deb before the four families arrived to talk with them about cooking at The Abbey.

In explaining his reasons for choosing to cook at The Abbey, David spoke about his experiences as a child: "My paternal grandmother was a good cook. She was well prepared, but cooking was a bit of a production. My mum's mother was a farmer's wife who loved cooking; food just happened and as we gathered there was a lot of joy around!"

David recognised that he has inherited from his early family times that sense of

enjoyment of cooking for others, coming to appreciate that well prepared, simple food, cooked from basic ingredients and shared as a gift, nurtures the heart of the community and the wellbeing of individuals

David's cooking career started some 20 years ago when he was involved in Cowwarr weekends. He and Deb catered for the first clergy conference at The Abbey in 2012, and then for The Abbey program weekends in years following. Over these years David still held a significant full-time position at Gippsland Water, so cooking for him was "recreational activity."

Of particular significance for David was cooking for the clergy conference, where he found himself "ministering to the people who had ministered to him" – he was able to give back in some measure to those who had given to him.

For the many years of clergy conferences before David retired, he would regularly take a week's holiday to cook at The Abbey for the clergy of the Gippsland Diocese. Clergy were delighted that David would make this commitment.

David has seriously considered ordination to the priesthood. However, through years of discernment he has now realised that his call is not to ordained ministry, but rather to cooking in situations where community is fostered and joy is shared; to share with others in the breaking of the bread.

We sat for a moment, realising that in the moments of breaking bread together we are all so graciously blessed.

About her reasons for cooking at The Abbey, Deb said, "I feel it's my ministry

call. I don't have to be here, but I feel I need to be here to offer my ministry side of things."

Deb and David work together, complementing each other. It's a shared call to which each brings their unique contribution, both in the way they care for others and in the jobs they do, and it all fits together.

If Deb is not here, David said there is a big hole, and without David similarly there is a big hole in the team.

Deb's focus is on setting up and David's is on cooking, but there are particular items that Deb cooks that David does not touch. It's all in place!

"It's quite exciting to recognise the scope of ministry that opens up," said David. "While we are here to cater and to ensure every person is well fed and well looked after, the actual

ministry is much broader than that and different for every group."

For many who come to The Abbey, this is church: in meeting and welcoming all, in discerning the moment and responding creatively and appropriately to every adult and every child – and in the gift of reward as eyes that were full of fear become bright and ask for another story.

David reflected, "My first association with The Abbey [then A'Beckett Park] was not long after Deb and I were married. I came down to pick up Kate and as I came in I realised there is a sense of God here, and I have never missed that when I come in."

Deb echoed David's sentiment: "... as soon as you drive in the driveway you feel that God is around you; you sense it."

Developing the ministry of catering, cooking and nurturing

We need to grow the Abbey catering/cooking team with people who:

- love to cook good simple and nourishing meals from basic ingredients, and who take joy and pride in their work and service
- are committed to nourishing and nurturing themselves and those who attend functions and activities at The Abbey.

We welcome people from a range of ages, interests and backgrounds. David and Deb are keen to hear from anyone who would like assist with catering at The Abbey. Deb and David are also seeking someone to assist with catering for the clergy conference at The Abbey on 7–10 June to see how it works.

Email David Chambers at dlc.mirror@gmail.com.



Families Week guests enjoying a game of cricket at The Abbey



Photo: Jo White

A smiling Steph Thorborrow and her team at the parish kitchen

PICAL Pantry, Phillip Island

Les Ridge

The parish kitchen at Phillip Island is used every Wednesday by the Phillip Island Community and Learning (PICAL) Centre to prepare meals for the casserole bank. The volunteers make 180–200 meals each week, which

provide emergency food relief to the most needy of our community.

The Parish of Bass-Phillip Island supports the work of PICAL by making our excellent commercial kitchen facilities available. This is part of our mission to the local community, as we do not ask for

rental for the use of the kitchen.

Coordinator of the PICAL Pantry, Steph Thorborrow, was busy with her team of cooks and bottle washers in late March. They were baking cakes and making all manner of pickles and preserves for a special stall at the Market on Chapel. This impressive effort was to help raise funds to support the important work of PICAL.

For more information about PICAL, visit www.pical.org.au.

Craft 'N' Chat Tuesdays @ The Parish

Tuesdays from 12.30
at St Mark's Parish Centre,
55–61 Albert St, Rosedale

Enjoy craft or getting together for a cuppa? Interested in getting together with like-minded people? Want to learn a new craft activity? Come and join in, perhaps bring a friend, and enjoy a cuppa and chat. There is no cost, just bring along whatever you would like to do or see what others are

doing and get some help to get started.

Crocheting, knitting, embroidery, collage, rock painting and cooking are just some of the activities on Tuesday afternoons in Rosedale.

Feel free to bring your craft activity with you. Phone Ann Williams for further information (0408 124 589).



As gathering restrictions eased, St Mark's Rosedale invited folk from around the parish and more widely to enjoy fellowship

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A position description and an application form can be obtained by contacting Lynne Sykes: sykesly77@gmail.com.

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EDITORIAL

May your faith be with you

May is a busy month for observances, both religious and secular, starting with the Pagan festival of May Day. My lighthearted headline is an oblique reference to an annual observance for Star Wars fans on 4 May (May the fourth be with you!). In this month you can also find Mothers’ Day, international days for the Red Cross and nurses, several diseases, migratory birds, tea, turtles, bees, love and freedom of the press. The calendar is crammed with secular subjects to celebrate or be concerned about.

The observance of Lent and Easter in 2021 included more fellowship than COVID permitted last year. Hopefully the religious festivals of Vesak (Buddha Day) and Eid al-Fitr (the end of Ramadan), which happen this month, will enjoy similar freedoms in Australia. For Jewish people this month, Shavuot commemorates the spring harvest and the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. There are two holy days in May for the Baha’i faith, including the Declaration of the Báb.

With Pentecost around the corner, John Batt reflects in this issue (p. 9) on past ecumenical activities of one group of Cooperating Churches in Gippsland.

On page 8, the Rev’d Dr Patrick McInerney writes about a statement developed by the Youth Parliament of the World’s Religions and an initiative of the Columban Centre for Christian–Muslim Relations, of which he is director. This group of young adults met and discussed their lived experiences of, and hopes and plans for, their faiths in Sydney. After consultations and refinement, in partnership with Western Sydney University, the youth parliament voted on the final draft and authorised publication. The result is *The Sydney Statement: Building Bridges Between Believers from Different Religions* (www.thesydneystatement.org.au).

Rev’d Patrick said, “We hope that many people will sign up to *The Sydney Statement* and themselves become a living document, a bridge between believers from different religions made, not out of steel, but out of flesh and blood relations.”

National Reconciliation Week begins on 27 May, marking almost 30 years since formal reconciliation in Australia began. This year’s theme is encouraging “braver and more impactful action.” In 2000, Reconciliation Australia was founded, to continue national leadership on reconciliation, and in that year hundreds of thousands walked across Sydney Harbour Bridge during National Reconciliation Week.

The celebration of Matariki (‘eyes of God’ or ‘little eyes’) begins in late May. This Māori observance denotes for many a new year, and the season of the first rising of the Pleiades star cluster. With a trans-Tasman travel bubble commencing last month, it seems that things are looking up.

Sally Woollett

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Inclusive ministry and diversity

In April / May 2019, a change began within my body. So too a journey, which the TGA story on inclusive ministry (April issue, p. 8) prompted me to share.

I experienced sudden vision loss and pain. That was optic neuritis. I was given urgent intravenous steroid treatment to prevent further damage from inflammation to my optic nerve and visual processing pathway.

The experience of optic neuritis is similar to opening your eyes underwater, losing colour and experiencing dullness, as well as losing peripheral sight.

This experience transformed my faith and closeness in relationship with God. My world and His Word and love became ‘real’ on another level. While lying in the hospital bed praying, trusting and talking with God, I surrendered my broken body just as Jesus did on the Cross. God knew my heart and my love for His Word daily. My heart broke into pieces not being able to read or process anything from my beloved Bible(s). God simply reminded me to rest my heart in His, to trust and that included the trust in the power of prayer.

One morning in hospital, I awoke in the grace of God and – to my amazement – experienced a peaceful light. Just like a film, God was miraculously ‘scrolling’ His Word through visions and pulling out particular verses like index cards in what felt like a torrential flood the entire time, so I could pray and endorse a ‘scribe’ to write for me. Ironically, I couldn’t ‘see’, yet His Word was so abundantly clear. To this day, God still communicates with me in this way. Yes, God works in diversity to strengthen the weak, the blind and the deaf.

Eventually, colour returned to my eyes in milliseconds of a miracle.

As promised, God is caring for me on this journey. Every step of the way. Through the strength of God, I am studying theology at Bible College. From my experience, and through grace, change has been enacted to enable learning at this college. A core value of this college is to see students transformed in theology, even with diversity. In their awareness and without a moment of hesitation, lecturers and faculty have sourced audio versions of the required textbooks and material, now permanently assigned to the unit for supporting diversity within the student cohort. This is above and beyond what one could expect.

“Nothing is impossible with God.” (Matthew 19:26)

Alisha Moyle,
Warragul

The art of collect writing

I enjoyed Cynthia Grove’s report, ‘Zoom participants learn art of collect writing’ in the April edition of TGA (p. 5), with its coverage of Julie Perrin’s seminar. However, it seems from the report that the presenter may have missed what I always understood to be the essence of collects in the liturgical context – and even as defined in the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*. As reflected in the Latin roots of the word, a ‘collect’ gathers one or more themes from the readings that are about to follow, and weaves them into a prayer that helps alert us to what God is going to say to us through holy scripture. To say it’s a “prayer about what’s most

in our hearts” or even “a prayer usually concerned with one topic” without any reference to the themes from the readings (Latin *lectio* – reading) seems to me rather too broad – and part perhaps of a possible trend to downplay the important role that readings have in our worship.

Rev’d Philip Muston,
Lakes Entrance

Melody brings back memories

Reading about Melody’s confirmation at Bairnsdale (March issue, p. 6) took me back 73 years to my confirmation at 13 years of age in England.

My friend Pauline and I, along with many other young people, had attended weeks of preparation at our church, by our vicar, the Rev’d Canon Brown.

Nearing the date, we got very excited as we tried on our white dresses and veils. I can’t remember a lot of the

actual ceremony, but it paved the way for a future life attending church and Communion, wherever I was.

I now lead the singing at St Nicholas’ Lakes Entrance – thanks for the memory.

Sandra R. Haynes,
Lakes Entrance