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The Gippsland Anglican

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This beautiful artwork, *Nativity Star*, was created by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian artist Safina Stewart. The artwork's simplicity gives clear focus to the magnificence of the Holy God and the vulnerability of Jesus as a tiny baby. In the centre are the Aboriginal U-shaped symbols of a woman and man nurturing a newborn baby. This represents Mary and Joseph caring for Jesus. Around them is the glow of the magnificent star of Bethlehem.

The Indigenous pattern work used to form the star symbolises land and water. The patterned star represents the unexplainable, enigmatic mystery that the God of glory becomes like us and walks these sacred lands with us.

Safina Stewart lives with her family in Wonthaggi in the Bass Coast.
To view more of Safina's artworks and canvas prints for sale,
visit artbysafina.com.au



A peace that the world cannot give

Zechariah's Song (Luke 1:68-79) is one of the great Advent canticles, and was a focus for our reflection at the recent Ecumenical Conversation at The Abbey. This paternal ode to John Baptist's future ministry ends with these familiar words: "In the tender compassion of our God the dawn from on high will break upon us, to shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace" (APBA, p. 30).

As the conflict between Israel and Gaza rages, it ought not be lost on Christians that God's Word became flesh precisely in the crucible of that troubled strip of earth. The specificity of the Incarnation is sometimes referred to as the 'scandal of particularity', prompting Annie Dillard to say: "We're all up to our necks in this particular scandal" (*Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, p. 79).

And we are up to our necks in it; not only because of the daily newsfeeds that confront us with the humanitarian catastrophe of this particular conflict, but also because of a universal human propensity towards violence.

The period 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) through to 10 December (Human Rights Day) maps out 16 Days Against Gender Based Violence – a UN campaign that is gaining traction each year, including in our churches. On 10 December 2023 it will be 75 years since the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see p. 19) – ironically perhaps, just months after the State of Israel was declared.

It is easy for us to imagine that the problem of violence – be it geopolitical or gendered – lies somewhere else: that nations are violent or that 'bad people' are violent.

Much harder is the realisation that 'the dawn from on high' – the light Jesus brought, and brings, into the world – illuminates the darkness of every human heart, including our capacity for, and complicity in, violence.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918–2008) – Russian writer, Nobel laureate and latterly Orthodox Christian who was critical of the violence wreaked by the Soviet Union – famously reflected from his prison cell:

Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line between good and evil passes not through states, nor between classes, nor between political parties either – but right through every human heart – and through all human hearts. (*Gulag Archipelago* 2, p. 597)

In part, this is a function of what St Paul called 'the powers' (Eph 6:12). We might think of these in terms of dysfunctional human systems (including in our churches) that are frequently invisible to us because they are part and parcel of the world in which we live; 'just the way things are,' so to speak.

One of the drivers of this systemic, structural violence is what some philosophers call 'mimetic rivalry' – a competitive desire that is partly innate and partly learned – and here I am indebted to Michael Wood's reading of Rene Girard in his recent book *Practicing Peace: Theology, Contemplation, and Action*.*

Human beings are, by nature, imitative: we copy one another. It's how infants learn language. It's also how we learn what to desire, as any advertising executive knows, or any parent who has tried to separate children warring over a toy that one child was not interested in until the other was, or any school counsellor dealing with cyberbullying.

It's when our learned desire becomes rivalrous, usually in a context of real or perceived scarcity, that violence emerges. Think of the story of Cain and Abel. In the logic of that narrative (not to be read literally, I would suggest; more of a mirror to human nature), there is only enough divine approval for one offering. The sin that "lurks at the door" of Cain's heart (Gen 4:7) is his competitive desire for God's favour – a "mimetic rivalry" that issues in bloodshed.

Sometimes that violence is projected onto an imagined or constructed common threat to the system, a dynamic we know well as scapegoating, as captured in Caiaphas' unwittingly ironic words in John's gospel (11:50): better that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish.

Into the particular systemic violence no less ironically known as the *Pax Romana* – the 'peace of Rome' – enters the Christlike God (Wood's winsome term). This 'Roman

peace' of Jesus' day was one achieved by the use, and abuse, of power. *Star Wars* has given this a new spin for recent generations in the form of the Empire, which crushes any and all resistance with unblinking brutality.

The Christlike God enters and breaks the cycle of violence not only by dying as an innocent victim/scapegoat (and, tragically, there are countless examples of such injustice) but by rising as the forgiving victim, and opening a new space of non-rivalry.

This is the logic – *logos* – the operating principle written into the undivided work of creation and redemption: violence is non-violently absorbed and transformed by God-in-Christ, the Word (*logos*) made flesh. As Wood explains (*Practicing Peace*, p. 67), "Whereas Abel's blood cried out from the ground for vengeance (Gen 4:10), Christ's death and resurrection speaks a 'better word than the blood of Abel' (Heb 12:24)."

This "better word" is the peace that the world cannot give. Not the *Pax Romana* nor some other all-too-familiar version thereof, but the *shalom* of God ushered in through the fully human one. The fulfilment of God's desire in the words "Let us make a human" (in Hebrew *adam*, Gen 1:26) is announced – again with great irony – by the Roman Governor Pilate, who presents him to the violent mob saying 'Behold the human' (in Greek *anthropos*, John 19:30).

So yes, as human beings bearing the divine image – an image perfected in Christ – we are, quite literally, up to our necks in the scandal of this Christlike God who entered that time and place of great conflict, then and now. This Christlike God enters still the conflicted places in our own divided hearts, inviting us to become more fully human, to be non-rivalrous imitators of the one who emptied himself to bear our flesh, and so guide our feet into the way of peace.

May that particular peace be yours this Advent and Christmas.

+RM

* Michael is an Anglican priest who has pioneered the use of Open Space, Talking Circle and Restorative Justice processes among church leaders, and will be facilitating next year's Clergy Conference.



Revved up Rev'd at Moto Grand Prix parish breakfast

Bass-Phillip Island Locum Rev'd Liam Matthews at the Moto Grand Prix breakfast event

■ Glenys Gijbers

Looking right at home on two wheels, Bass-Phillip Island Locum Rev'd Liam Matthews was a much-appreciated part of the GP breakfast event hosted by the parish.

At the event, held over 20–23 October, around 330 hungry motorcyclists were provided with hot, yummy breakfasts, cooked by our skilled kitchen staff and delivered to the tables by our team of busy waiters.

The time and effort that went into planning, preparing and cleaning up afterwards was all worth it in the end. Well-deserved congratulations to all who were involved!

Despite the adverse weather conditions and the change of the Moto GP program timing, a happy band of helpers once again rolled up their sleeves to produce hearty breakfasts for racegoers, visitors and locals in the parish hall. This annual event has been happening since the first Moto GP in 1989 – that's quite a record, which was only interrupted by the arrival of COVID.

The atmosphere was welcoming and friendly, and around 325 breakfasts were served over the four days – that equates to 110 serves of scrambled eggs, 179 poached, 58 fried, 234 serves of baked

beans, 259 tomatoes, 318 rashers of bacon and 245 sausages, not to mention cereal, porridge, tea/coffee and toast! Thanks to MAK Eggs for their generous egg donation.

It was great to have many visitors who were regulars meeting with their mates before heading to the track. We also had many international and interstate visitors. Once again we had a great team of willing volunteers, each with their own task to do, including

setting and waiting at tables, cooking, serving meals, making coffee, washing dishes and more. The team was made up of parishioners, along with long term helpers from other organisations, and was ably led by Rev'd Erena Norfolk, who took over the reigns from Pauline Leditschke. Thank you, Erena and everyone who helped; it was a pleasure to be involved.

Courtesy Bass-Phillip Island parish news



Some happy diners at the parish hall breakfast



We are Gippsland Anglicans – Committed in Christ, Connecting in Service, Creative in Spirit. We are committed to providing a safe environment for all, especially children and vulnerable people. We acknowledge the First Nations people of this region as the traditional custodians of the land on which the Diocese of Gippsland serves, and pay our respects to past, present and emerging Elders of the GunaiKurnai, Boonwurrung, Bidawal and Ngarigo/Monero peoples.

Parishes get packing for Operation Christmas Child

KORUMBURRA

Sue Wilson

At the end of a recent service at St Paul's Korumburra the Rev'd Canon Fran Grimes blessed the Christmas boxes gathered from members and friends of the parish. Some possible destinations are Papua New Guinea and Fiji. I thought of the climates in those places as I listened to the ferocious wind and rain whipping through Korumburra. There are many contrasts that can be drawn between South Gippsland and equatorial lands, and between the people who inhabit each place.

But something as simple as filling a Christmas box reminded me that we also have much in common. Memories of my own childhood prompted me to choose a pretty floral summer dress, a doll and a sad-eyed, cuddly koala for packing.

Like all of us who packed a box, I did so with the thought that children everywhere have much in common. They might love a toy or a teddy, a car or a soccer ball and live very far away and in very different climates and circumstances, but all our children wish for and are worthy of love and care.



Operation Christmas Child boxes at St Paul's Korumburra

CORNER INLET



Bishop Richard, along with church members and clergy at Christ Church Foster, helped pack the Christmas Child boxes for transport

Carole Williams

Each year Christ Church Foster takes up the challenge to bring Christmas joy to at least 100 children in South-East Asia.

Working with Samaritan's Purse's Operation Christmas Child annual project, parishioners and friends team up to fill

shoebox-sized boxes with gifts for children who may never have received a Christmas present before.

Parishioner Sue Dower coordinates the project, searching out suitable items throughout the year, some of which are

locally donated, and also making lovely items of children's clothing herself for the boxes.

Our church organist, Elaine Smith, made gorgeous knitted teddies, with one for each of the 107 boxes. Notebooks, pencils, toys, balls, games and hygiene items are all included as well. The boxes can hold an amazing number of small items, each one planned to delight the recipient.

Over the past 20 or so years Operation Christmas Child in Corner Inlet has become a parish project involving all of our congregations. It is a community outreach as well, engaging with other locals who love to help.

This year's project culminated on 22 October. Our congregation was delighted to find this was the day Bishop Richard would be visiting Christ Church, and invited him to bless the boxes prior to their departure overseas.

Bishop Richard joined with the congregation in packing boxes into the Dowers' vehicle, ready for transport to the South Gippsland drop-off location.

Coordinator Sue thanks church members, friends and our local FoodWorks store and newsagency for their support of Corner Inlet parish's Operation Christmas Child 2023.



Participants at the Funsters games night at St Peter's Leongatha

Funsters and fellowship at St Peter's Leongatha

Joanne Stuchbery

St Peter's playgroup began two years ago with an Anglicare Parish Partnership grant and the enthusiasm of a small team led by Leongatha parishioner Stacey Williamson. Every Monday morning during school term a number of preschoolers aged up to six, along with their parents and carers, attend the church hall for play and morning tea. As the children play, parents and carers get a chance to build relationships and share the struggles and joys of life with babies and little ones.

St Peter's also hosts an all-age games night once a month, led by a group called the 'Funsters'. Participants are encouraged to bring games and snacks from home and share in a night of healthy competition and good old-fashioned fun. It is lovely to see adults and children sharing time, there is a lot of laughter, and it does get a bit noisy sometimes. Some trivia questions and a riddle draw the evening to a close. The winners of the trivia are presented with a mock trophy, which is all part of the fun. This is a wonderful time of fellowship and a time that engages not

only the parish but many members of the community as well.

The vision for St Peter's Parish for this year has been 'moving forward in the power of the Resurrection'. We are dedicated to opening up the church to the community as much as possible so that others, through friendship and engagement, have the opportunity to know that God is alive, that the church is alive, and that they are so loved and precious to God.

Anglicans in Development

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Image source: The Advent appeal was created jointly by students in Nungalinga College's Art and Faith group. Both images: © Nungalinga College. Used with permission.

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The Gippsland Anglican

Sowing the seeds at Yarram Anglican Church

■ Christine Timmerman

The Yarram Share Garden, behind Holy Trinity Yarram, has a special secret name. The real name of the plots of veggies, rampant pumpkins and gracious garlic is the Free Garden – because this place is free in many senses.

The Free Garden has no rosters, no routines, no memberships or joining fees and basically no committee. Anyone can pull weeds, take produce and contribute as they see a need.

The garden operates on the idea of energy exchange, with an almost zero budget. Over its time of growth, the garden has received numerous donations of materials, including hay for bale gardens, fertiliser, composting leaves from the health centre next door, seedlings and equipment.

An abundance of recycled material is being gifted to make recycled shopping bags. The money raised from the purchase of these bags will be used to plant apple trees in the purposed mini orchard.

People visit the garden on their nightly walks, watch its progress from the windows of the adjacent nursing home and health centre, or just find a hidden gem behind the bricks and mortar of the church. Most of these visitors are not members of the church, or any other religious group.

In a time when so many small country churches are struggling for attendance, or serving ageing populations, small seeds are bringing people to the church grounds. It's not likely the visitors to the garden will become Sunday worshippers, but there is a quiet revolution underway. And souls who wouldn't normally wander the grounds of a church happily make the detour to the garden, rather than travelling past.

Through divine timing, many of these visitors meet a member of the church who might be there getting ready for the next service. A conversation is often struck, and a new connection is made. People are

welcome to access the garden at any time, as it is a place of safety.

When the agendas and membership requirements are removed, individuals who are not able to survive amongst structure, who struggle with anxiety, PTSD or have other challenges to their mental health, are attracted to the garden. And they are free to do so, in their own time and space.

It has been a challenge to establish a space free of constraints and expectations on the land of an organisation that is welded to traditions and structure. But the flexibility of the leadership and parish council of the Yarram Anglican Church has demonstrated trust in letting the garden grow both physically and spiritually with a new vision. They have truly adopted the understanding of "build it and they will come".

Maybe once the orchard is planted, a new secret name might emerge: The Church of the Orchard.

The Yarram Share Garden at Holy Trinity Yarram

What makes a welcoming church?

■ Jan Down

John Jeffries OAM from Partners in Ministry gave an excellent presentation to an ecumenical gathering at St Paul's Cathedral on Sunday 29 October.

It was encouraging and stimulating to have such a mix of people, with representatives from Baptist, Catholic, Anglican and community churches around Gippsland, including a large group from various denominations at Lakes Entrance.

The messages of the afternoon were

backed up by studies of mainly Melbourne churches. There were some surprising results. The most significant 10 minutes for making people feel welcome is the 10 minutes after the service. It was also important to contact them within a day or two of the Sunday service.

Another surprising statistic was that most visitors arrive on ordinary Sundays, rather than coming to special services.

The first point of contact for most

people is the church website. And what they are looking for is the service times and the church address. So this information needs to be on the home page.

After the presentation, John gave us a group exercise to do, considering what our church was doing well, what it needed to drop and what it could do better. Thanks to Dean Keren Terpstra for organising such a useful event, and for making it open to the wider church.

Cup weekend in the Parish of Yarram



The Lion's Club cooks at Yarram's monthly community dinner

■ Rev'd Tony Wicking

The Melbourne Cup weekend is a time when many people visit Yarram and surrounds, and this year was no exception.

At our monthly community dinner on the Friday night, about 40 people attended a

barbecue cooked by the Lions Club. The Roman Catholic congregation brought salads, and sweets were provided by the other churches. As part of the evening we all enjoyed the guessing game of Celebrity Heads.

On Saturday the combined churches gathered for the annual Blessing of the Fleet at Port Albert. Here we gave thanks for the variety of boats, both commercial and recreational, as well as the Coast Guard, blessed them and prayed for safety for all the users and travellers on them. We like to bless the boats at the beginning of the season.

On Sunday we were visited by a vintage car club of about 25 T Model Fords. It was a trip down memory lane as these old cars were parked around the church at Port Albert and they received their first blessing from Rev'd Tony Wicking. After the blessing, a member of the congregation spoke about the history of St John's.

Later that morning, at Holy Trinity Yarram, two tables were dedicated in memory of past parishioners Merle and Kevin (Mick) Heasley. The parish purchased a slab of blackwood that was too long for use as a single table, so this was cut into two pieces. The larger table will be used as the communion table, and the smaller one as a prayer table. The family very much approved, and both items of furniture are welcome additions to the church.

A day of 'lasts' at St Paul's Anglican Grammar



(L-R) Anesu, Bailey, Tiana and Tia enjoyed a bright and colourful last day of school

■ Paula Walland

The last day of school can bring a mix of emotions and excitement for the future. St Paul's Anglican Grammar School Year 12 students celebrated their last official day of school full of smiles and colour before they knuckled down to study for upcoming exams.

Commencing the morning dressed up as some spectacular characters, the students had a day full of 'lasts' – last morning tea, last assembly, last award presentation, last walk through familiar classrooms, last chapel service and last time singing school songs they have sung for years.

Determined to make it a happy and relaxing day, educators organised a fun-filled 'last' school afternoon, with a barbecue, giant water slide and bubble soccer, which the Year 12 students enjoyed immensely as they anticipated what lies ahead.

Have your say in TGA!

Send your letters* of up to 350 words to
editor@gippslandanglicans.org.au.

* Please include your name and suburb for publication.



Letters may be edited in the interests of clarity or space.

Pleasant Sunday Afternoons resume at Christ Church Drouin

■ Pauline Davies and Libby Willems

The last Sunday afternoon in October in Drouin was particularly pleasant at Christ Church Drouin, when the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon concerts resumed post-COVID.

Before 2019, the church hosted approximately three general concerts each year, with different musicians and choirs. This was a way to open our beautiful church to the community, inviting them to enjoy a pleasant Sunday afternoon with us. No booking was necessary and only a gold coin donation was requested.

After some recent community enquiries, our parish council decided to recommence these events. So on the afternoon of 29 October the church doors were opened wide, and guests were welcomed, seated and set to share a pleasant time.

Forty members of the Baw Baw Singers took their seats in the altar area, which had been carefully and respectfully reordered for this event, allowing an audience of 100 people to sit comfortably in the pews, looking up to the contemporary stained-glass windows depicting a West Gippsland scene and The Parable of the Sower. Musical director Libby Willems introduced each song, accompanied by musicians Jeremy Allan (keyboard), Brett Forge (flute) and Bill Carter (electric bass).

A happy repertoire of popular tunes from across many decades was performed, including *Things* (Bobby Darin), *Georgia On My Mind* (Hoagy Carmichael and Stuart Gorrell), *My Guy* (Smokey Robinson), *Love Changes Everything* (Andrew Lloyd Webber), *True Colors* (Billy Steinberg and Tom Kelly), and a Beatles medley. The final song of the program was Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday* (Bruce Welch and Brian

Bennett) – and, to the audience's delight, two soft beachballs were tossed into the audience for some playful fun.

Libby and the Baw Baw Singers (bawbawsingers.weebly.com) are exceptionally popular and rehearse in the church hall every Monday evening. This is an entry-level choir for all ages, meaning there are no auditions and everyone is made to feel welcome and included. As a community organisation, they can keep the cost of participating very low.

After the October performance, visitors enjoyed an afternoon tea in the church hall. Our regular church parishioners are generous in making plates of sandwiches and slices. It was a great feeling to see so many happy people, and to have so many of the community in our church hall enjoying

our amenities and hospitality. The many appreciative comments show that the efforts of our team of volunteers are very worthwhile, and our parish council is keen to host more concerts next year.

Musical director Libby Willems and the Baw Baw Singers at Christ Church Drouin

Patricia Preston

Lunch with the locals at St Paul's Cathedral

Some produce from the Cathedral's Spring Harvest Festival

■ Jan Down

A delicious frittata made with silver beet, spinach, spring onions and eggs from parishioners' gardens was the feature, all-local dish at our Lunch with a Local Flavour at St Paul's Cathedral on 5 November.

Also included in the meal were some cold roast Gippsland beef, some Thorpdale potatoes and a mixed salad of vegetables, also mainly from parish gardens.

Gluten-free options included a rice salad (Australian rice) with Mornington Peninsula chicken and Koo Wee Rup asparagus. Dessert was an apple and rhubarb crumble slice, with the rhubarb from a church member's garden and the apples from the Picnic Point orchard in Bairnsdale.

A week before the lunch, St Paul's held a Spring Harvest Festival. Some of the produce offered was then kept aside for the lunch, while the remainder was donated to Sale Food Support.

A goodly crowd of about 30 people sat down to enjoy food, fellowship and fun as

we learned about where the food came from and the concept of 'food miles' in a quiz between courses. 'Food miles' refers to the distance food is transported between production and consumption. The more miles, the more greenhouse gases produced.

By purchasing an orange grown in Mildura rather than California you reduce food miles from 12,879 to 567 kilometres (see tinyurl.com/CERESFoodMiles).

One question in the quiz was to guess the most local ingredient in the lunch. This turned out to be some parsley growing in the community garden behind the church – so zero food miles!

Lunch with a

Local Flavour was this year's main climate change activity for the Cathedral, in response to the Synod decision to make climate change a focus for the three years of this Synod cycle. Thanks to all those who donated produce and helped to make the meal a great success. We hope to hold another lunch in autumn next year, and include even more local ingredients from the summer harvest.



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A vegetable frittata was the feature dish at Lunch with a Local Flavour



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Back to Raymond Island

■ Dr Cath Connelly

As a newcomer to the Abbey, I am coming to appreciate just how influential this place has been in the lives of so many Gippslanders and others further afield. A'Beckett Park (as the Abbey was previously known) has been the location for countless church and youth camps, rallies, Girls' Friendly Society events and Cursillo weekends, to name a few.

It is a delight to hear stories of the memories that remain from this time. One woman spoke of her moment of conversion when she attended a Eucharist on the lakeside where an overturned canoe was used as the altar. A man recently spoke of the life-changing moment when, as a young man, camp leaders were available to hear his childhood pain and speak to him of the love offered in Christ.

With this in mind, the Abbey is inviting

you to attend a 'Back to Raymond Island' day on **Saturday 27 April 2024**. Yes, it is advance notice – we want to be sure you have a chance to attend. There will be opportunities to reflect on the ongoing impact in your life of the time you spent here. There will be celebrations, a barbecue, Eucharist (maybe even using an upturned canoe), fellowship and opportunities to enjoy the surrounds. Come and see the changes that have taken place here since you last visited; come tell us what it was like in your day.

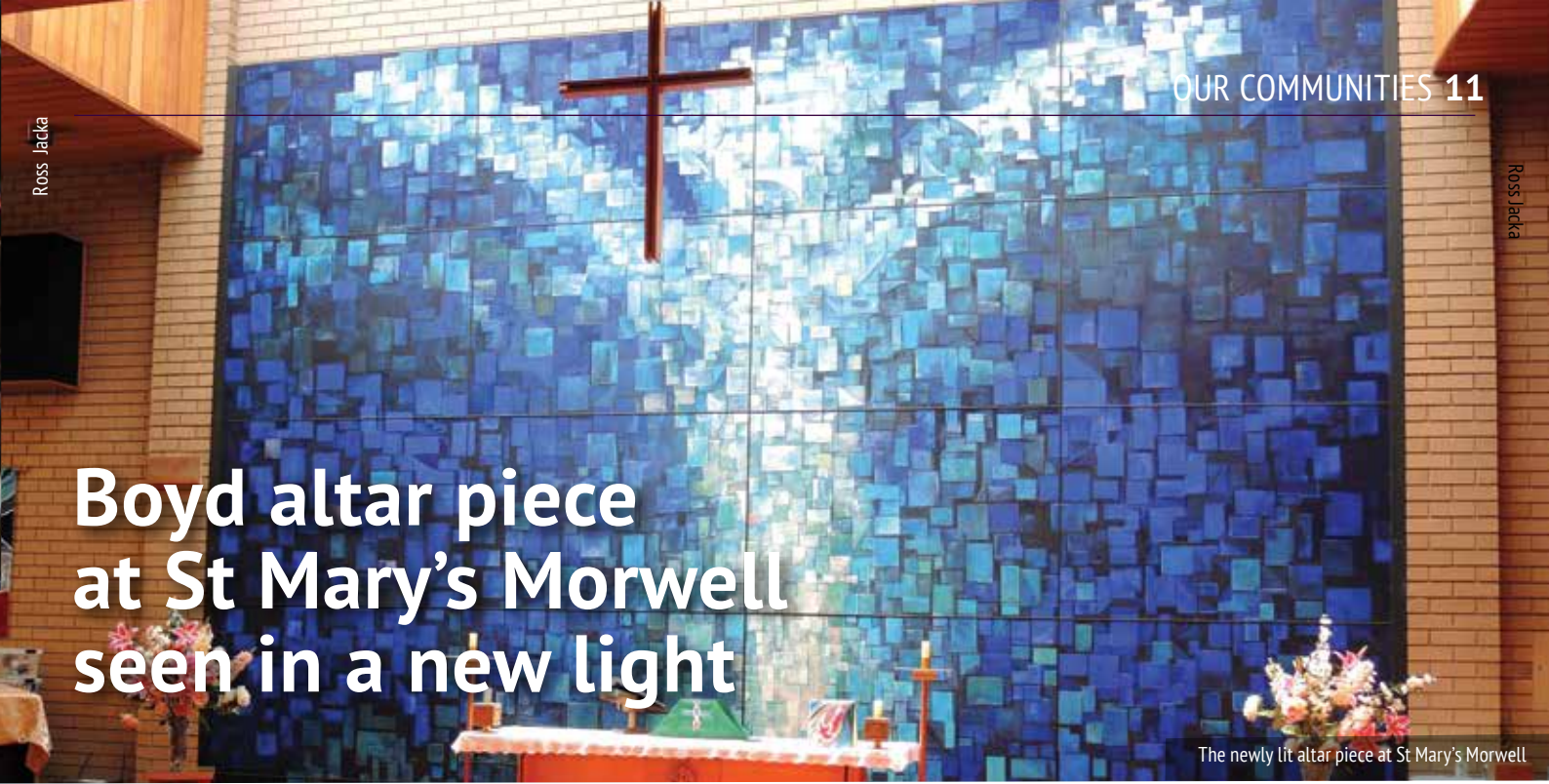
We'll give you more details next year – we just wanted to let you get the date into your diary!
Watch your inbox for an email describing a rich feast of programs on offer at The Abbey in 2024. This is your place; come find a home here.

Save the date



DECEMBER

- 13: *Hush*. A retreat day on the Island. Spirituality of Music
- 14: Celtic music session



Boyd altar piece at St Mary's Morwell seen in a new light

The newly lit altar piece at St Mary's Morwell

■ Ven Sue Jacka

The superb Arthur Boyd altar piece that dominates the interior of St Mary's Morwell has recently been relit, as the artist intended.

The semi-abstract painting is *The Ascending Christ*, and its combination of lapis lazuli blues and extraordinarily clever use of tonal shades makes the Christ figure shimmer. Many people have found it an inspiration in their prayer and worship.

The mural was originally commissioned for St John's Yallourn. Apparently it was too large for the church there, so some of it was removed and stored for later use.

As the time came near for the demolition of the town, calls were put out to local churches to see if any were interested in rehoming it. The congregation at St Mary's Morwell, under the leadership of Archdeacon Frank Lowe, decided to build a new church complex that would accommodate the mural. In 1980 the mural was reinstalled and the lower portion reunited with the rest of the artwork.

Interestingly for local history buffs, Arthur Boyd had a Gippsland connection. He was the grandson of Emma Minnie A'Beckett (sister of Major Arthur A'Beckett, his namesake). The different members

of the A'Beckett family were great philanthropists in Gippsland in West Gippsland, and they gave the land for what we now know as the Abbey at A'Beckett Park on Raymond Island.

A large skylight above the mural has recently been restored, allowing more light to fall on the painting, as Boyd intended. A celebration of this work was held on 24 November at St Mary's Morwell. The guest speaker, art historian Rodney Forbes, spoke of Boyd's life and other examples of Boyd's work. We enjoyed music by local Gippsland singer Libby Willems and light refreshments.

Two girls confirmed, two trees planted at St John's Nar Nar Goon

■ Rev'd Cathy Turnbull

We were delighted at St John's Nar Nar Goon to have Bishop Richard with us to confirm sisters Skylah and Kiara during a recent Sunday morning service. Family travelled from as far as Ballarat to be present and it was lovely to have our little church full.

The strength of both Skylah's and Kiara's faith was shown by their eager responses to Bishop Richard's questions and the joy on their faces.

Following the service we adjourned

outside to plant two olive trees in honour of the occasion and as part of the Communion Forest initiative. These trees, as they grow, it is hoped, will provide a peaceful place to sit and pray into the future, as part of a Garden of Peace.

Letter to the editor

Mental Health First Aid

As I read the Mental Health First Aid article in October's *TGA* (p. 12), I wondered where I had heard about this course before.

As noted in a *New Scientist* article (23 September 2023, p. 11), a recent analysis by the Cochrane Collaboration (*Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, doi.org./ktn6) indicated that none of the relevant trials that looked at these courses showed the training to be effective in improving mental health.

Dr Jack Andrews at the School of Psychology, University of New South Wales in Sydney says (in *New Scientist*), "We need to tread carefully when we are running ahead to widely implement initiatives when the evidence base is weak."

David Miller, Yarram

St James' Traralgon celebrates Feast of All Saints and All Souls

■ Glenda Edebohls

On 5 November at St James' Traralgon we celebrated the Feast of All Saints and All Souls. Rev'd Marilyn Obersby spent some time with the children, explaining the significance of the day, and then everyone was invited to write a name or a short prayer for someone or something special on coloured paper. These were then decorated with coloured hearts and hung on the Prayer Tree.

During the service, while Rev'd Marilyn read the names of those who had died during the year, people were invited to light a candle

and offer prayer for their own loved ones who had passed away. The names of those baptised during the year were also read out, to signify that the life cycle continues to turn.



The Prayer Tree at St James' Traralgon

Empowering voices, fostering inclusion



International Day of People with Disability

■ Jane Anderson

I am grateful to *The Gippsland Anglican* for providing a platform to share these insights from our *Engagement Inspiration* report with you. As I write this, we approach the International Day of People with Disability (3 December), and I remain committed to amplifying the voices and experiences of individuals living with disabilities in the Latrobe Valley. This day is not just a date on the calendar; it's a reminder of the rights and wellbeing of those who face unique barriers to inclusivity in our community.

In my 2018–19 Statement of Intent, I made a commitment to the Victorian Minister for Health and to communities in Latrobe to undertake a codesign process to determine a way of working for my office. As the Latrobe Health Advocate, an essential part of my job is to listen to and understand the views and needs of people in Latrobe. For me, the only way to do this is to first understand how people in Latrobe want to have their voices heard and why this is important to them. In particular, these are people who may be experiencing disadvantage, people who may not usually have their voices heard, or people who may not recognise their voice, which may be for a range of reasons.

I would like to share some details from our *Engagement Inspiration* report from people living with disabilities.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR GOOD ENGAGEMENT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY

One step ahead

People need to pre-empt the needs of people living with disability where possible, in order to increase the physical and emotional safety of the engagement. This might involve talking on the phone beforehand to better understand a person's needs, providing options and alternatives, finding an accessible venue or inviting people to bring a support person if they would like. But we found it is also the details such as providing an agenda, pre-reading, and name tags so that engagement is as accessible as possible. It's also important to respond to unexpected needs by checking in regularly during a conversation.

Hearing unheard voices

While some people are excellent and consistent advocates for themselves or their loved ones, others might not be comfortable speaking up. Engaging a mix of leading advocates and those who might not have a voice already is important to ensure a diverse representation of the experience of living with a disability in Latrobe Valley.

Creating opportunities for peer support

Meeting with multiple people with a disability at the same time (while not expecting their experience to be the same) can help in some situations as people can give each other a voice. We've found that many people could relate to each other's

experience and that the engagement itself was a validating experience. People also told us that they enjoy learning from others and hearing about how their experiences and preferences might be different.

BARRIERS AND ENABLERS OF GOOD WELLBEING

Getting support is hard

The people we met are all very skilled at navigating the complex systems around them to find and access the support that they need. However, they have had to learn these skills the hard way and can still struggle to get what they need to live well because formal disability supports can be hard to understand, navigate, request and access.

Working together works

People seemed to really appreciate a collaborative approach; in one case an employer created teams that best suited the skills and personalities of their employees. In another case, a parent felt that their child's school wasn't willing to work together for their child's best interests.

People are diverse but systems are not

We heard that services struggled to be flexible and responsive to the diversity of people, their disabilities and their needs. People fell through the gaps if they didn't fit into the categories or eligibilities of the system and often had no alternative.

WHAT REALLY MATTERS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH A DISABILITY?

Listen

The people we met living with disabilities in Latrobe Valley were clear on a common theme: that they know themselves and their needs best. It is important to them that their experience is valued and respected, and it guides the people and supports around them.

Nothing about me without me

Following on from this, people wanted to lead or at a minimum be included in the decisions that affect them and have the information and accessibility they need to be able to fully participate in these decisions.

Celebration

We heard a few stories of people being recognised for their skills and talents. It was important for everyone we spoke to that they are seen for their strengths, successes and abilities rather than their challenges.

My commitment as a Latrobe Health Advocate

In acknowledgement of this International Day of People with Disability, let us recommit ourselves to creating inclusive and accessible environments. I remain dedicated to supporting the rights and wellbeing of individuals with disabilities. Together, we can make a significant difference in the lives of all members of our community.

I continue to hear from communities who share their goals, barriers and suggestions and how they want to be engaged by governments and services across Latrobe.

As part of my role, I prioritise the experiences of Latrobe communities and advocate for changes in systems that can improve their health and overall welfare. My focus is on reaching out to those who are often not heard and giving them a voice through a platform that can bring their aspirations and concerns to the attention of the government and services.

I strongly encourage governments and services to prioritise community input in the design and delivery of programs.

If you, or a group you belong to, have questions or would like to share your experiences with me, please get in touch with my team on 1800 319 255 and they will organise a time for us to catch up.



The Engagement Inspiration report is available at lhadvocate.vic.gov.au/publication/engagement-inspiration.

Ambassadors for International Day of People with Disability 2023

The federal government has named 11 official Ambassadors for this year's International Day of People with Disability (IDPwD), highlighting the diverse talents of people with disability across Australia.

IDPwD is a United Nations observed day held on 3 December each year that aims to increase public awareness, understanding and inclusion of people with disability.

One in six Australians – 4.4 million people – are living with disability. Minister for Social Services Amanda Rishworth said this year's group of Ambassadors is the largest to date, and reflects not just the diversity but the intersectionality of disability in Australia.

These role models are all inspirational and are already challenging stereotypes and changing society's attitudes towards disability.

"International Day of People with Disability offers the opportunity to raise the profile of people with disability and this year the Albanese Government is welcoming a record number of Ambassadors from all walks of life to share their stories," Minister Rishworth said.

"From filmmakers and writers to lawyers, actors, and athletes, our Ambassadors will play an important role in demonstrating the strengths and intersecting experiences of people with disability.

"By accepting the invitation to become Ambassadors, these 11 Australians are not just making disability more visible in the community, but providing positive and honest representations of people with disability – just as previous Ambassadors have done."

Anja Christoffersen is an international model, author, disability advocate and entrepreneur. She is the founder of Champion Health Agency, a talent agency that represents people with disability, chronic illness and their carers.

Ann-Mason Furmage is a disability advocate who has worked as an accountant and financial controller in Australia and the USA for over 20 years. She has held numerous leadership positions in the disability sector, including as former President of the Physical Disability Council of NSW.

Charlie and Lewis Smith are twins from Adelaide with a passion for filmmaking, which they are pursuing through Bus Stop Films. They host a podcast called Twin Times where they discuss all things entertainment, filmmaking and sports.

Giancarlo de Vera is a lawyer and advocate for disability, multiculturalism, racial justice, LGBTQIA+ affairs and cultural diversity. In 2021, Giancarlo was listed as one of the 40 Under 40 Most Influential Asian-Australians by the Asian-Australian Leadership Summit.

Grace Edward spent some time in a refugee camp in Kenya before her family was granted a humanitarian visa when she was 8 to come to Australia in 2003. Grace is one of the co-founders of Youth CALD Disability Collective (YCDC), a volunteer group that promotes awareness and advocates for the interests of young CALD people with disability.

Gretta Serov is a motivational speaker and writer. She is the founder and head writer

of the blog 'On Our Own Tracks', which features stories of people with disability overcoming challenges and guides for how to achieve your dreams.

Hannah Diviney is a writer, actor and advocate. She is the co-founder and Editor in Chief of Missing Perspectives, a publication dedicated to young female storytelling, and recently published her first book. Hannah came into global prominence in early 2022 when she publicly called out Lizzo and Beyoncé for using an ableist slur in their songs, which they subsequently corrected.

Hugo Taheny is an athlete currently ranked world number 1 for shotput and discus for people with Down syndrome. He is also the South Australian Health Ambassador for Down Syndrome Australia.

Michael Theo is a Wollongong-based actor and podcaster. He was featured on the hit ABC TV show 'Love on the Spectrum' and hosts his own podcast, 'Mr A+ with Michael Theo', which aims to bring love and light to people's lives.

Dr Scott Avery is an Indigenous disability researcher and advocate on health and social inequalities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. He is a senior lecturer at Western Sydney University and has undertaken extensive community-based research while working with the First Peoples Disability Network.

Department of Social Services

Momentum builds for *The Forest Underground*

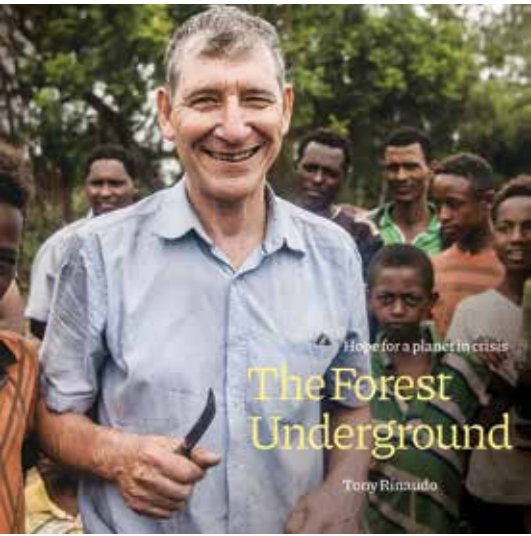
■ Claire Harvey

It's now 42 years since Tony and Liz Rinaudo left Australia for Niger, to serve as missionaries with SIM (Serving in Mission) Australia, having met during their Rural Sciences studies at the University of New England. Tony had grown up with a love of nature and the outdoors, and a keen interest in trees. Even as a child his heart carried heaviness around issues of global poverty and injustice. By 2018 global interest in his unique and compelling story was spreading around the world, and Tony became the recipient of the incredibly prestigious Right Livelihood Award (also known as the alternate Nobel). By 2021 crowdfunding had commenced to enable the team at ISCAST to publish his autobiography, *The Forest Underground: Hope for a Planet in Crisis*, which went on to win the Australian Christian Book of the Year Award in 2022.

As someone who has worked as a careers advisor in a Christian school, I particularly appreciate the transferable life lessons that are embedded within Tony's own faith journey. While there

are several rich themes woven beautifully through this story, one of the most compelling threads is the influential role that others played in Tony's own development. He writes appreciatively of his mother's strong faith; he learned so much about the real world, and of building relationships of trust, by working alongside his entrepreneurial father; and he also treasured books, which became key sources of wisdom, inspiration and guidance for him. Just recently we've heard of a 15-year-old Iranian refugee who himself now speaks of being profoundly impacted by Tony's own story. He is incredibly keen to see this message of hopefulness spread, and for this revolutionary method of farming and caring for creation, now known as Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration, to continue to bring healing to our broken world.

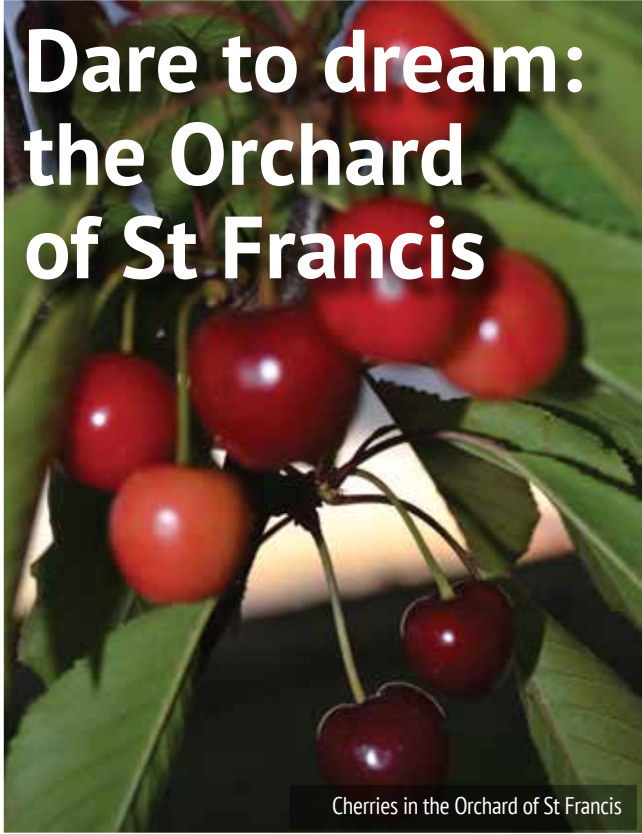
ISCAST is preparing to celebrate sales reaching 5000 copies, including e-books and the new audiobook. 'Hope' is the word that so many readers use in describing this



book's impact, which makes it a wonderful gift, particularly for those who 'already have everything they need'.

In the lead-up to Christmas this year, ISCAST is offering the opportunity to churches, schools and community groups to partner in spreading this hopeful story with boxes of books (quantity 12) available for purchase at 50% off the recommended retail price. This wonderful fundraising opportunity would be particularly suitable for environmental groups looking to kickstart a new project in the new year!

Contact Claire Harvey, ISCAST's Book Project Coordinator (claireharvey@iscast.org), for more information.



Cherries in the Orchard of St Francis

Dare to dream: the Orchard of St Francis

■ Rev'd Lyn Williams

In 2017, I had a dream of making connections with the community and for the church having a visible presence in a particular way. From the small beginnings of offering folk fresh produce from my small veggie garden, an idea has grown.

The questions that arose for me with this dream included, 'How could I build on this idea using my backyard?', 'How does having a little patch of land relate to stewardship?' and 'How can I offer support and assistance to groups and organisations who themselves offer support to individuals and families?'

And so the Orchard of St Francis was born – to grow and distribute fresh produce among people in my community in Central Gippsland. The seed was planted; an idea is growing

bigger and bearing fruit. A variety of fruit trees have been planted in my backyard, the fruit trees have become established and are coming into blossom as I write. Now we wait for the harvest.

I am so grateful to the small group of people, both from Gippsland and Melbourne, for their support and for seeing the potential of this project.

This year promises to be the season when the harvest will be sufficient that I can begin distributing a variety of fruit within the community. I look forward to this dream growing further over the coming years and to distributing the fruits of the Orchard of St Francis. Christmas blessings and peace.

If you wish to discuss anything about this project, please do not hesitate to contact me (redlandsoasis@protonmail.com).

Implementing the Victorian Child Safety Standards

Visit gippslandanglicans.org.au/resources/safe-ministry

This year, TGA is highlighting the 11 Child Safe Standards to help us think, talk about and improve the way we do things in our ministries.

This month we take a look at two Standards:

- Standard 10: *Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved.*
- Standard 11: *Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.*

What is this standard about?

Standard 10 is about:

- reviewing policies and procedures
- analysing complaints and procedures.

Standard 11 is about:

- implementation of policies and procedures.

Compliance indicators (Standard 10)

This is what the Commissioner for Children and Young People will be looking for:

- a Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy
- evidence of risk assessments undertaken and management plans adopted in response
- evidence of complaint handling policy and process and how you will respond (this is outlined in the Diocesan 'Safe Church Policy')
- evidence of safeguarding actions taken when contracting with third parties.

When to conduct a review (Standard 11)

- If policies/procedures are not current – more than three years old.
- If staff and volunteer do not know how to access policies/procedures.
- If you are seeing the same issue over and over and have not implemented changes.

What to do now

Standard 10:

- Ensure all parish policies and procedures have a version listed and a regular review period indicated on the document.
- Analyse any reported incidents over the past year – look for trends and patterns.

Standard 11:

- Ensure you have the documents mentioned.

Adapted from *A Parish Guide to Implementation of the Victorian 11 Child Safe Standards*.



Scott & Sharon Anderson

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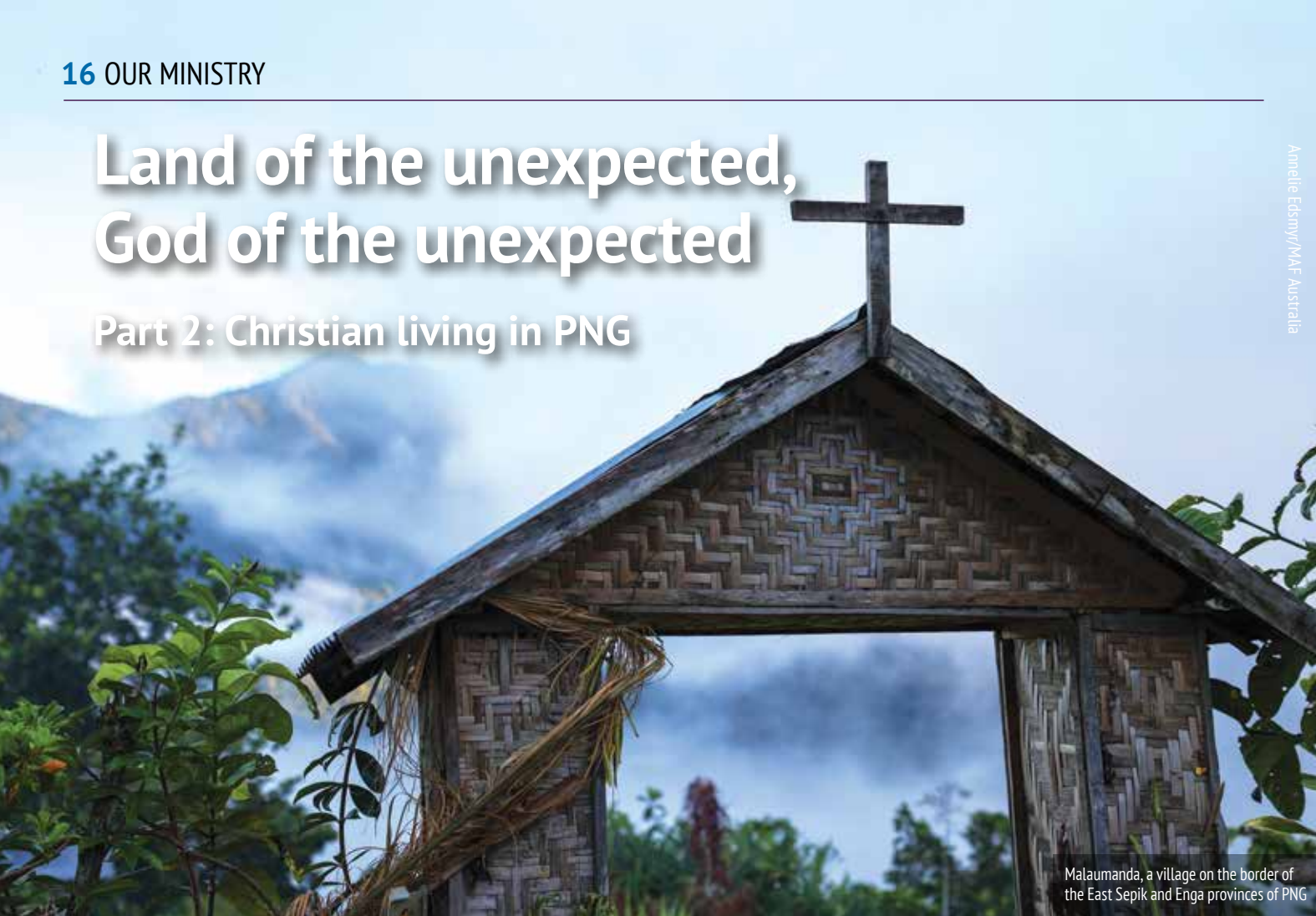
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Land of the unexpected, God of the unexpected

Part 2: Christian living in PNG



Annette Edrington/MAF Australia

Malaumanda, a village on the border of the East Sepik and Enga provinces of PNG

Jennifer Boer

Christianity in PNG is often described as “a mile wide and an inch deep”. PNG describes itself as a Christian nation. It has an abundance of Christian churches of every type. The rush of missionaries into the country after the Second World War has resulted in representation of many protestant denominations from around the world, which has added to the strong Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches, which began before the First World War. Now, as urbanisation, education and materialism increase, many Papuans are leaving their shallow faiths behind. The deeply committed remnant keep the churches running, as they do in Australia. Some church affiliation is really a cultural, tribal affiliation.

PNG is a tribal nation. Culturally, one's first loyalty is to one's clan and one's tribe. This takes precedence over most other loyalties, even gospel principles at times. As a result, the city of Mt Hagen has not only its original Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, but, as a provincial meeting place, every other denomination in the province and beyond, and numerous ‘house churches’ started by family groups to minister to their clan members in the city. Some inter-church combined activities happen, such as evangelistic crusades led by visiting preachers, but mostly it is every clan for itself.

Denominations were given regional areas in the early days of PNG mission. This was ignored by the Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists and some independent groups. It does mean that there are many parts of PNG with absolutely no

Anglican presence. Areas like the Jimi mountains and Valley north of Mt Hagen and Popondetta are Anglican strongholds with a long and vibrant history. Membership of the Anglican Church is almost an act of tribal loyalty.



Members of Mothers' Union dance at an ordination in Mt Hagen

We worshipped at St Michael and All Angels church, where the bishop of Aipo Rongo Diocese is based. The liturgy, conducted by alternate weeks in Tok Pisin and English, was comfortably familiar, and a tremendous help in the task of learning the lingua franca. Hymns were sung painfully slowly, but the choruses, locally written or adopted from western writers, were sung with vigour and enthusiasm. The church would start half empty and fill up as the service continued. Time is a fluid concept in PNG.

Although everyday services owe much to the traditions of the first Anglican evangelists, big celebrations have a huge element of PNG traditional culture and dress. Invariably they are followed by a *mumu* (traditional earth oven meal).

Some aspects of worship were new to us – taking the Bible to the centre of the church before reading the gospel and welcoming the word of God with song. It is a feature I enjoyed, revering the word. However, very few people had their own Bible, prayer book or song book, despite the efforts of previous missionaries. The diocese valued the lectionary most and sold printed copies at the start of each year.

Another delightful feature of Anglican worship is that, after the adults have taken communion, all the unconfirmed come to the altar rail to be blessed and prayed for. Our first parish priest was Father Charlie, and both he and his successor, another Charlie, did this with love and intent. During this time, the youth led us in enthusiastic singing of classics such as *When the Saints*. The other children would run to the altar and walk away with dreamy, happy faces. It moved me to tears.

Other features of church life were less endearing and a challenge to healthy cooperation between missionaries and the local church. The relationship between the PNG church and the original sending churches is evolving with history. In keeping with current mission theory, all resources donated to the PNG church are controlled by the PNG church. At times, family and tribal loyalties led to what we in the west would regard as inefficiency and even corruption.

A visiting missionary from Tasmania was living on the Anglican compound when we arrived. She had been sent to help the diocese get their books in order. She was stressed and frustrated because the PNG culture of ‘secret knowledge’ meant that the church leadership would not show her the books so she could do her job, until her last few months in PNG.

Another Scottish missionary was sent to a Jimi village, only to find that the grass hut she was to live in had been ransacked and there was no crockery, cookware, bedding or food – nothing, really. It was vermin-infested and dirty. No one took responsibility for



Baptisms at Ialibu, in PNG's Southern Highlands Province

the preparation of where she would live. Geoff and I began to send her food on the MAF Australia plane. This was in what is probably the wealthiest village in the diocese.

I suspect this was because missionaries are not ‘our tribe’, so there was a feeling that they did not deserve support. There was also damaging rivalry between the Jimi valley and Popondetta members of our St Michael's congregation. I feel for

bishop Nathan Ingen, who is a Jimi man and must often be torn between his Jimi and diocesan loyalties.

The church is quite patriarchal, in line with the culture, so I was never asked to preach, just share. If I had been, I suspect would have begun with 1 Corinthians 1-3!

Part 3 will be published in the February 2024 issue of *TGA*.

Tackling the scourge of scabies in PNG

While the focus for many at Christmas is on a peaceful child ‘away in a manger’, Bishop Jeffrey Driver is thinking about children enduring a contagious torture.

Retired to Gippsland, Bishop Jeffrey has been working part-time as a theological educator in PNG for the past six years and he has been confronted by a number of health needs in the area he serves in the Northern Province beyond the Kokoda Track. One of many endemic health afflictions is scabies.

“While scabies is not the immediate health threat of, say malaria or TB, it is endemic and distressing. It does afflict adults, but seems to be present much more in children. It is caused by a mite but is passed on by social interaction, particularly the nursing and cuddling of children.

“It causes pustules and irritation from neck to toe. I see children screaming with the irritation. It affects their ability to develop and receive an education. It impacts on their health more generally.

“Medication is not available under the usual government funded programs, though the combination of medication and education produces good results.”

Bishop Jeffrey is advocating a treatment program with a distinctive element – the treatment of whole villages. Because scabies is transmitted socially, he explained, treatment of a whole community gives the best hope of good outcomes.

The program will be advised by Dr Warren Weightman, a dermatologist from Adelaide with more than 30 years experience. Supported by Oro Nickel in the Northern Province, a nurse will be employed to scope out treatment, provide education and do the actual treatment, which involves application of topical cream over the whole body. This must be accompanied by treatment of clothing and bedding.

The intention is that two villages will be treated in 2024, with this providing the basis for the development of an ongoing program.

“My hope is that in these villages, perhaps in Christmas 2025, there will be less suffering children and more Christmas peace.”

Visit gippslandanglicans.org.au/donate to read more about or support Bishop Jeffrey's work in PNG.



Daily Advent devotional series reflects on God’s ‘common home’

■ Monique Hughes

Each year in the lead-up to Christmas, Common Grace shares a daily Advent devotional series, inviting Australian Christians to be present to Jesus, to each other and to the world around so that our faith is nurtured, our love is stimulated and our hope is energised.

Over the past few years, thousands of Christians have journeyed through these Advent devotionals with Common Grace with diverse voices, from across the breadth of the Christian church in Australia, interpreting each year’s unique theme and bringing to life our mission of pursuing Jesus and justice.

For 2024, Common Grace has invited a diverse group of contributors from across the movement to reflect on the longing, hope and beauty of God’s ‘common home’ being realised, revealed and renewed through the birth of Jesus.

This year’s Advent series theme draws on the poem and video *For Our Common Home*, created for Common Grace by poet Will Small.

The poem begins:

In the beginning God made a home.
Not a house with four walls and a door –
a place of belonging and safety for all
for bodies with wings and tails,
or fins and scales, or human skin
like you and I exist within.
We could describe this space
as one that was marked with
common grace.

About writing this poem, Will Small says:

Story is one of the great teachers, and the ‘Common Home’ poem was born out of listening to the stories of people personally impacted by the four areas of injustice Common Grace focuses on [relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, creation and climate, people seeking asylum, and domestic and family violence].

As I listened and then reflected on these four areas I realised that all of them could be understood as the disruption of ‘home’. Australia’s colonial history is a disruption of our First People’s home. Asylum seekers pursue refuge when home has become unsafe. Domestic violence betrays home at the core. And our environmental crisis is a failure to protect our one shared home as the whole of humanity.

‘Home’ is a deeply human concept; grounding us in place, safety and belonging. Perhaps every act of justice is an attempt to recover this sense of home.

It is in the season of Advent that we celebrate the coming of Jesus alongside our deep longing for goodness, beauty, justice and the flourishing of God’s ‘common home’ to be worked out and revealed in our world today.

We are reminded of God’s great plan of reconciliation, the restoration of relationships

and renewal of all things (Mt 19:28), heralded through the birth of Christ. It is the moment that brings into vision the hope we have of God’s saving and restoring grace through Jesus Christ, God with us, who humbled himself by entering into our humanity and pointed to the renewal of God’s ‘common home’. A home where goodness and love and grace prevail; where justice and healing flows; where all people and creation flourish together, enjoying the goodness and relationship that God intends.

This special series will feature both written and creative devotionals and prayers from a diverse group of contributors including Dr Louise Gosbell, Rev’d Dr Andrew Errington, Teresa Brierley, Rev’d Mitch Forbes, Erin Kennedy, Aunty Sue Hodges, Rev’d Dr Melinda Cousins, Joanna Hayes, Rev’d Dr Megan Powell du Toit, Dr Byron Smith, Aunty Alison Overeem, Alanna Glover, Mish Graham, Joshua Lane, Rev’d Christine McPherson, Becca De Souza, Dr Isabel O’Keeffe, Meredith Walker-Harding, Jasmine Wrangles, Bianca Manning, Franz James, Gershon Nimbalker and more.

To find out more about Common Grace’s devotional series, to view the full poetry and video and sign up to have this series delivered daily to your inbox in December, visit commongrace.org.au. Previous devotional series are available at commongrace.org.au/advent_devotional_series

Monique Hughes is Communications Coordinator at Common Grace.



Honouring human rights heroes

Eleanor Roosevelt holding the English language version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in November 1949

Commonwealth Attorney-General the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP will join 21 Awards finalists and up to 600 guests to honour some of Australia’s leading human rights heroes to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the landmark document setting out human rights and responsibilities for everyone, everywhere, every day.

The Attorney-General will deliver this year’s Human Rights Day Oration at the Australian Human Rights Awards on 8 December. He will speak about the significance of the Declaration in both an Australian and international context.

Commission President, Emeritus Professor Rosalind Croucher AM, said, “It’s wonderful to have the first law officer of our Commonwealth involved in commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Declaration, which Australia played a key role in drafting in 1948. We look forward to his remarks in relation to this.

“The Australian Government is also

currently conducting an inquiry into updating Australia’s human rights framework, so the views of the Attorney-General about this will be of significant interest, especially for workers in the community, government, legal and education sectors.”

Each year the Commission presents the Human Rights Day Oration to mark Human Rights Day, the day the Declaration was adopted by the United Nations (10 December 1948). The Oration is delivered by a leading Australian working in the field of human rights and social justice or whose work protects and promotes human rights in Australia.

Previous orators include First Nations academic and activist Larissa Behrendt AO, Deputy Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia and former federal Attorney-General Justice Robert McClelland, Royal Commissioner and NSW Supreme Court judge Justice Peter McClellan, UNSW law professor Dr Christine Forster and disability advocate Rosemary Kayess.

The Oration will be followed by the presentation ceremony for the 2023 Australian Human Rights Awards. Five awards will be presented, including the prestigious Australian Human Rights Medal (presented annually since the Award’s inception in 1987). This year’s awards will form a key part of Australia’s commemorations for the Declaration’s anniversary.

Victorian finalists include Common Ground (Media & Creative Industries Award category) for an outstanding approach and commitment to producing innovative and unique content that centres First Nations storytellers and communities in the digital space. Finalists Maggie Blenden and Keshi Moore (Young People’s Award category) are doing outstanding work through Naarm Law Students on Voice to frame First Nations social justice issues using a human rights perspective and addressing misinformation and disinformation about the Voice referendum across multiple youth-oriented platforms.

Professor Croucher said, “We’re thrilled to be honouring 21 truly outstanding human rights champions as part of this year’s Awards. I congratulate all our finalists on their selection and thank them for the important contributions they have made and are making to protect and promote human rights in Australia.”

The event will take place at the UTS Great Hall in Sydney on Friday 8 December. Registration to attend a livestream of the event can be done at humanitix.com.

Australian Human Rights Commission



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A short history of three very famous Christmas carols



Aaron Burden

■ Peter Roennfeldt

Singing and Christmas seem to go naturally together, like plum pudding and custard. Even those who would not normally attend a choir concert or church service throughout the year might happily participate in a civic Carols by Candlelight or a Midnight Mass. In these settings, the carols come thick and fast, and everyone joins in, almost involuntarily. But what is the origin of the choral music which adorns these settings?

The tradition of carol singing dates from the Middle Ages, and was not restricted to the Christmas season. There were carols for Easter, for New Year, and sometimes even for political events such as the Battle of Agincourt.

The poetic form was simple: a succession of stanzas with different texts, interspersed with a recurring refrain. In more recent times, the term 'carol' has come to mean any song associated with Christmas.

Medieval carols from England and elsewhere have survived, though

Due to its universality, *Silent Night* was in 2011 designated by UNESCO as an intangible item of cultural heritage.

much transformed. *Good Christian Men, Rejoice* dates from the 14th century, though only its text has been reliably attributed, to the Dominican friar Heinrich Seuse (Suso). The melody is known in Latin as *In dulci jubilo* ('in sweet joy'), and has been frequently used as the basis of extended instrumental or vocal compositions.

This song found its way into English through the 1853 publication *Carols for Christmastide* by J.M. Neale. This and other volumes of carols contributed materially to the Victorian era's wholesale adoption of seasonal trimmings, along with royally sanctioned Christmas trees and greeting cards.

During the centuries between the first iteration of a carol tradition and the Dickensian revival of the Christmas spirit in the mid-1800s, there was comparatively little in the way of English composition of new works in this genre. A few pieces that are more appropriately termed Christmas hymns were, however, produced during the 18th century.

One of these is *Adeste fideles* or *O Come, All Ye Faithful*. Its authorship is disputed, but the most likely source is the 1751 volume *Cantus diversi*, published by John Francis Wade. Like most other Christmas carols, its text has clear Christian references.

Interestingly, it is also thought to contain covert Jacobite symbolism, with the phrases "all ye faithful" and "to Bethlehem" referring respectively to the supporters of Bonnie Prince Charlie and England itself. Wade fled to France after the failure of the 1745 Jacobite uprising, but his hymn soon came into regular use, particularly amongst English Catholics.

An indication of its wider adoption is the inclusion of *O Come, All Ye Faithful* within the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols, a familiar modern day tradition inaugurated at Cornwall's Truro Cathedral in 1880. In the age of mass media, this most renowned Christmas ceremony, as practised in King's College Cambridge, has become universally familiar, firstly on radio and then television. Choirs around the world also perform their own Lessons and Carols programs every December, and most often conclude with this piece.

The most famous Christmas carol of all time is undoubtedly *Silent Night, Holy Night*. The original words for *Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht* were written by Joseph Mohr in 1816 and the melody two years later by Franz Xaver Gruber, when both were living in villages near Salzburg.

The German version was published soon afterward, and the familiar English translation in 1859, since when it has become known in nearly 150 languages. Due to its universality, *Silent Night* was in 2011 designated by UNESCO as an intangible item of cultural heritage.

With its stereotypical overlay of European winter costumes and snow-covered fir trees, the translation of Christmas traditions around the world is problematic. In Australia, there have been several attempts to develop parallel traditions of

carols that eschew northern hemisphere references, in favour of local culture.

The best known are those composed by W.G. James, former federal controller of music for the ABC, to texts by John Wheeler. Outback images of drovers, summer heat, red dust and red-gold moon, dancing brolgas, mulga plains, Christmas bush, gully creeks and grazing sheep recur throughout these songs.

They were published in several sets, commencing in 1948. Despite several recordings by major ensembles, their familiarity and popularity have fluctuated greatly. However, two of James' carols recently made it into a "top 10" list of Aussie Christmas songs by the *Australian Times*, whose target audience is expats living in the UK.

The tradition of singing Christmas carols is embedded in the season, even though the contexts where they are performed may differ widely from that where the words and music originated. We happily ignore the obvious disconnect between the imagery of some familiar carols and our hot Australian summers, and there is something reassuring about hearing and singing them once again, with feeling, every Christmastime.

Peter Roennfeldt (peterroennfeldt.com) is Emeritus Professor of Music, Griffith University.

First published at theconversation.com

Remembering *A Gippsland Carol* this Christmas

Brian Chapman (Bunyip parish) and the Rev'd Canon Dr Jim Connelly (Drouin parish) collaborated in 2016 to produce *A Gippsland Carol*, which imagines Gippsland at the moment of Christ's birth.

As the chorus joyfully proclaims:

All creation hails the morning;
Christ has come into the world.

The debut performance of *A Gippsland Carol* is available on The West Gippsland Chorale's YouTube channel. See page 24 for the full score and text. An alternative tune is *Ode to Joy*.

Music Foundation Trust ticks all boxes

The Trustees are pleased to announce that all legal requirements have now been fulfilled for the St Paul's Cathedral Sale Music Foundation Trust to continue to accept donations, to manage fund-raising events and to approve grants.

Chairperson Marion Dewar reports that the Trust, launched in 2021, was registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission from October 2022, approved for income tax exemption and GST concession by the ATO in January 2023, and in June 2023 became eligible to receive tax deductible donations and was approved to be included on the Register of Cultural Organisations by the Department of Communications.

Trustees are grateful to staff at Sullivan Braham for legal assistance. Dean Keren Terpstra recently



St Paul's Cathedral Sale Music Foundation Trust

ABN 41 695 239 960

organised a day for members of Greater Chapter and Trustees of 'dreaming and visioning for how the music program at the Cathedral and the Foundation that will support it may be developed', which was facilitated by organisational psychologist Dr Leanne Habeeb. Thank you Leanne!

Dean Keren said, "The music program is shaping up with some hopeful directions for 2024, with the hope that we will be able to offer a couple of scholarships for young people, as well as working in partnership with St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne to offer opportunities for learning to play the

organ, starting with a launch event, hopefully on 3 February."

The Trustees, together with Dean Keren Terpstra, are delighted to invite you to consider an interest in the Trust, for example by offering prayer, musical gifts, assistance with fundraising, practical assistance for events, or financial gifts.

Financial gifts may be made at gippslandanglicans.org.au/donate. Assistance with events would be very welcome – please contact Dean Keren (KerenT@gippslandanglicans.org.au).

Calling Gippsland Home

Rev'd Canon Dr Jim Connelly

Self-published, 2023

■ Sue Fordham

The Rev'd Canon Dr Jim Connelly's latest self-published book, *Calling Gippsland Home: Famous Men and Women of Gippsland*, contains 12 pen portraits of people who, for some part of their lives, have called Gippsland home.

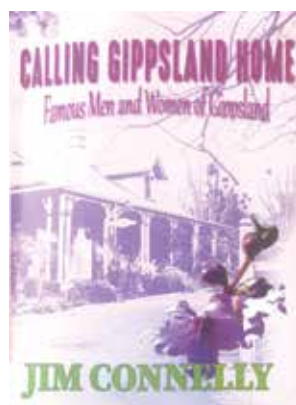
Most are very recognisable names: Mary Grant Bruce, Lionel Rose, Dr Helen Caldicott, Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet and David Williamson. Others are less recognisable, but nonetheless titans in their field. In short, there is no one who is in any way ordinary.

The diversity of callings and talents is remarkable. There are two war heroes, a poet, a world champion boxer, a writer of Australian fiction, an early feminist and political radical, a botanist, a historian, a medico-environmentalist, and a medical virologist/researcher and Nobel laureate.

Each of the 12 portraits is about a dozen or so pages long and begins with a brief statement of the person's accomplishment and the part of Gippsland associated with them.

Each portrait is a concisely written jewel, packed with detail and supported by references, adding flesh and insight to the narrative.

I read the book in a single sitting but



recommend against that – the detail of each merits a slower, more deliberative approach. There is so much to take in, so much to think about, so much to wonder at.

For example, when I read historian Sir Keith Hancock's entry, I felt compelled to check my own library of Australian history books and to look online to briefly locate his masterwork, *The Australian Dictionary of Biography*. And I wondered how useful that source was to Jim Connelly in the research he must have done prior to the writing of *Calling Gippsland Home*. Yes, each portrait rewards and invites a time of reflection.

Yet, for all the detail in each portrait, this is not difficult reading because the writing itself is direct, simple and spare. Each word works. Not one word is superfluous. Look at how much information the author packs into one paragraph describing Mary Grant Bruce's

life after the Second World War:

Soon after the war ended, the family came back to Australia to settle in Mabel Street in Traralgon, close to Mary's brother Maxwell and their parents. Although not wealthy, they did employ a cook and a maid. Mary hated domestic drudgery! They mixed in local affairs. They camped in the South Gippsland Hills. They went to Eden for holidays. In 1925, a week-long Back-to-Sale was organised. Mary and George took Mary's father, Lewis, now widowed. They all had a whale of a time! Mary continued to turn out books; she encouraged women's organisations in Gippsland, such as the Fellowship of Gippsland Women; she often appeared in local towns to support charitable work. For a short time, she took a job in Melbourne as editor of Women's World. Mary enjoyed one side of women's new found freedoms – she smoked up to forty cigarettes a day!

This lean, economical writing is a feature of every story. It is visually evocative, for example in the 'Great Escape' account of Dr Geoffrey Cornish from prisoner-of-war camp Stalag Luft III.

This is also writing that facilitates our understanding of the complexity of the work of Sir Frank Macfarlane Burnet, recipient of the Nobel Prize in Medicine or Physiology in 1960 for his immunological research.

This book is scholarly in the breadth of its research and referencing and, above all, thoroughly entertaining.

Calling Gippsland Home is available in selected Gippsland bookshops or from the author (ajcon@dcsi.net.au), with a book launch at the Drouin RSL Hall on 3 December at 2.30 pm.

and help us cope with grief and trauma, according to a suite of projects conducted by Melbourne University researchers (pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/5-ways-singing-helps-humanity).

These findings may not seem like news to those of you who sing at church or with another group. I hope you are already reaping the many benefits of singing.

If you'd like some Gippsland flavour in your Advent singing, please do acquaint yourself with *A Gippsland Carol*, by the Rev'd Canon Dr Jim Connelly and Brian Chapman (pp 21 and 24).

If poetry is more your style, turn to page 18 to read about this year's Common Grace Daily Advent devotional series, featuring the video poetry *For Our Common Home*, by Will Small. His poem came from listening to stories of injustice of the sort that Common Grace works to address.

Speaking about his poem, Will says, "'Home' is a deeply human concept; grounding us in place, safety and belonging. Perhaps every act of justice is an attempt to recover this sense of home."

Reading beyond theology

■ Richard Prideaux reflects on some non-theological books he has read this year.

I have been a reader from early childhood, and I enjoy reading both fiction and non-fiction across many genres. Retirement in recent years has enabled me to tackle some larger writings, including Marcel Proust's seven volumes of *In Search of Lost Time*, three volumes of Montaigne's *Essays* and most of the *Works of Josephus*.

In 2023 I have enjoyed reading many novels, some for the second time. These include *Horse* (Geraldine Brooks), *A Brief Affair* (Alex Miller), *All the Pretty Horses* (Cormac McCarthy), *Did Ye Hear Mammy Died?* (Séamas O'Reilly), *Gone With the Wind* (Margaret Mitchell), *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (Virginia Smith), *To Kill a Mocking Bird* (Harper Lee), *A Farewell to Arms* (Ernest Hemingway), *Persuasion* (Jane Austen), *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (James Baldwin), *The Great Gatsby* (F. Scott Fitzgerald), *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (D.H. Lawrence), *Tom Lake* (Ann Patchett), *The Ambassadors* (Henry James), *Unsheltered* (Barbara Kingsolver) and *Lost Illusions* (Honoré de Balzac).

Of these novelists I think Brooks, Miller, Lawrence and Austen are all in my top drawer, with James just

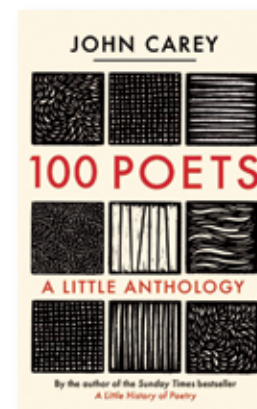
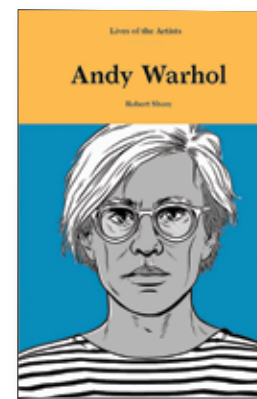
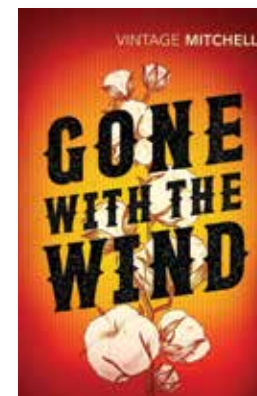
missing out. Virginia Smith's exceptional *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is not matched by her other novels. I was struck by how much straight history Margaret Mitchell squeezed

into *Gone With the Wind*, which I had wrongly assumed was a simple love story.

In non-fiction, my tastes are quite varied. Alatheia Fitzalan Howard's *The Windsor Diaries* is a very personal and interesting view of the young princesses' life secluded in Windsor Castle during the Second World War. James Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* is a horrific account of the life of a young child caught up in the Japanese assault on China in the same war.

I love to read books on art, and Simon Schama's beautifully illustrated account of the lives of Rubens and Rembrandt entitled *Rembrandt's Eyes* (see November TGA, p. 23) is a most insightful and illuminating volume indeed. In the modern art world, journalist Robert Shore's easy-to-read account of the amazing and complex life of commercial artist and photographer Andy Warhol is hard to put down.

Regarding psychology, Virginia Axline's serious/humorous account of a child living with an IQ of 168 is mesmerizing. Equally involving is Mark Hudson's humorous account of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. I am ambivalent about



the deeper meaning of William Paul Young's *The Shack*. I enjoy reading poetry, and so John Carey's *100 Poets: A Little Anthology* was an absolute treat.

These choices might seem like a strange mixture to some readers. One explanation is that my wife and I belong to a book club, and each member selects their own text each month – which makes for some surprising choices. This year we decided to choose American authors, hence the large number of American writers. Many of these American novels I read years ago and it is fascinating to see how novels one once loved don't mean as much later in life. Some other novels, not well understood in youth, make a very big impact in the maturity of adulthood.

The other novels I have read fall into categories of warfare, psychology and art. The psychology interest, especially with young students, is inevitable for someone who has spent 51 years in school education. Understanding the unique nature of every child you teach may be a tall order but it has been a key part of my view of teaching and being a principal. The horror of war is never far from the mind of anyone who faces the world's quarrels and hatreds squarely – and although I hate this horror I want to try to understand what it was like for the people involved. As for books about art, I have an enduring passion for art history thanks to an outstanding Theory of Art teacher in year 9 at secondary school. Art and culture are wonderful teachers, and I have travelled far and wide to enjoy and think about the artistic endeavour.

Reading is transformative, and it is a deeply felt and enjoyable need for me.

From
the
editor



This month I have been buoyed once again by the stories of helping and hoping in *The Gippsland Anglican*.

Page 19 features past First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt holding a landmark document: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Turning 75 this year, the Declaration is the most widely translated document in the world (sitting beside the Bible as the most translated book), and its 30 articles describe those human rights that are considered fundamental and deserving of universal protection.

Since 1987, the Australian Human Rights Awards have recognised people working to improve human rights through law, media and creative industries and in their

communities. They also recognise young people trying to make a difference. You can read more about this year's Victorian finalists on page 19.

On page 21, Marion Dewar, Chairperson of the St Paul's Cathedral Music Foundation, shares the good news that the Foundation has been approved for inclusion on the Register of Cultural Organisations. Thanks to a 'dreaming and visioning' day organised recently by Dean Keren Terpstra, there has been fruitful thinking about the development of the Cathedral's music program.

"The tradition of carol singing dates from the Middle Ages, and was not restricted to the Christmas season. There were carols for Easter, for New Year, and sometimes even for political events such as the Battle of Agincourt," says Emeritus Professor of Music Peter Roennfeldt (p. 20). His potted history of three famous Christmas carols includes the interesting fact that *Silent Night* is one of UNESCO's intangible items of cultural heritage.

Singing connects us in many ways, and it can improve our happiness, our health,

A Gippsland Carol

Words by Revd Jim Connelly

Brian Chapman



1. What is this that moves the heav - ens? Morn - ing breez - es make re - ply:
Coo - pra - cam - bra's peaks are stir - ring; Winds of life and love and joy;
Now the ban - di - coots are paus - ing, Sniff the air in won - der - ment.
All cre - a - tion hails the morn - ing; Christ has come in - to the world.

What is this that stirs the waters?
Patterns dance on Tambo's tide;
Rock to rock the message passes,
He who was to come is born.
Birds in chorus break the silence,
Brolgas dance, the bell birds chime.
*All creation hails the morning;
Christ has come into the world.*

What is stirring in this forest?
Ancient branches bending low;
Orchids tremble, tree-ferns quiver
Nature's hidden litany.
Now the waves are calmed in homage
Cease their surge on Woolamai
*All creation hails the morning;
Christ has come into the world.*

Who are these that hail the sunrise?
Speaking to their spirit world?
Softly treading Baw Baw's summit,
People of this timeless land;
Those of every race and culture,
Now conjoined in Spirit's fold.
*All creation hails the morning;
Christ has come into the world.*

The Gippsland Anglican

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