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future

RRP \$7.95

# The Gippsland Anglican

CELEBRATING 120 YEARS



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Carol Monson



CHRISTMAS 2024

## Keeping Christ in Christmas

Stacey Kearney, Children's Outreach Coordinator, helps Roshini Blanchard to prepare for her role as the Star in the Warragul Anglican nativity play. See page 10.



# Let us not fear this light

*'It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.'*

This sentence comes from a longer quote by Marianne Williamson, though it is often attributed to Nelson Mandela, who cited it in his 1994 Inauguration speech.

Advent is the season in the church's year that celebrates the coming of light. The symbolism of what is counter-intuitive in the southern hemisphere – where the long summer days begin gradually shortening at Christmas – is more immediately obvious in the northern hemisphere, where Christmas marks the point after the winter solstice when one can first sense the days lengthening.

As we gather around Advent wreaths in Australia on glary December Sunday mornings, anxious about rising mercury and hot north winds, we have to use our imagination to see each new candle piercing the deepest darkness of a wintry church in Europe or North America.

The promise of Advent is that the light has come, and will come again, to the darkest of places, and in the darkest of times.

Mandela understood this better than most. So why would he quote Williamson's aphorism? Why would we be afraid of the light?

In the Fourth Gospel Jesus touches on this in his early exchange with Nicodemus, who of course comes to Jesus by night (John 3:2) no doubt for fear of what his colleagues on the ruling council of the religious authorities might think. 'Light has come into the world', Jesus says to this teacher of Israel, 'but people loved darkness instead of light.' (3:19)

In revealing what is, light casts a shadow. The truth of what is brought to light is not always palatable, or easy to deal with. The contrast that light generates can confront us with what we would prefer be kept hidden, secret, including those parts of ourselves that carry unresolved shame or guilt.

***It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us.***

The light that we watch and wait for in Advent, however, is not just any light.

It is not the unforgiving searchlight of a watchtower ready to trap us in some act of rebellion or desperation. It is not a sudden, searing sensor light tripped by the trespass of some real or imaginary boundary. It is not the cold unflinching clinical light we associate with emergency remediation.

Like the fragile flickering of a candle in an Advent wreath, the light that has come gently – and is coming still – into the world in Christ is as vulnerable as a newborn child. It needs sheltering from the wind, including from the air pushed around by fans in muggy Australian churches! It is surrounded by prayer and story telling, so that its blessings can be received – hope, joy, peace, love – as a quality of light that illuminates particular darkness, including yours and mine.

It is the light of such truth as will set us free from whatever form our captivity takes, and not return us to it, or exchange one form for another.

It is the stubborn, steady light that – though threatened by the works of darkness (Eph 5:11) – is not overcome by them (John 1:5).

This light has been shone in our hearts, revealing God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6); glory revealed in what Irenaeus described as the human being fully alive, as Jesus of Nazareth was fully alive, and who lights a path so that we also might be drawn into fulness of life in our time and place, in the uniqueness and the commonality of our being human.

Of some lights we do well to be afraid. But let us not fear this light, nor even the shadow it casts. Let us rather pray with the psalmist:

'If I say 'Surely the darkness will cover me:  
and the night will enclose me',  
The darkness is no darkness with you,  
but the night is as clear as the day:  
the darkness and the light are both alike. (139:11-12)

This Advent and Christmas may our hearts and our churches be places where the light of Christ is welcomed, rekindled, and nurtured.

And may that light shine in us and through us into the darkest of times, and the darkest of places, that our households, neighbourhoods, communities – and indeed the world God so loves – might know the hope, joy, peace, and love which comes with this distinctive light, in which there is no darkness at all. (1 John 1:5)



**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.**

# Colin Oakley appointed to Lakes Entrance / Metung



The Rev'd Colin Oakley

## ■ Bishop Richard

The Rev'd Colin Oakley has accepted the invitation to serve as Rector of the Parish of Lakes Entrance / Metung on the recommendation of the Clergy Appointments Advisory Board.

Colin has been Priest-in-Charge of Westernport these last eight years, and is known to many as a priest with a pastoral heart and a desire to equip God's people for their ministry of sharing the gospel in word and action.

For those Gippsland Anglicans

who may not know him so well, Colin writes:

I am married to Anthea – a teacher and tutor extraordinaire. We have two children, Helen (a police officer) and James (a baker), four grandchildren, Stefan (13), Zackary (10), Paige (7) and Charlie (4), and two dogs, Layla and Miles.

I was born in England in the 1960s. Due to the labour struggles

there we moved to Melbourne in 1966. Dad was a traditional solid plasterer and worked on projects like Lady Jane's Chapel in Leicester and Collins Place in Melbourne. His company was one of the best in Victoria. I followed in his footsteps, but working for Dad was 'too much of a good thing' so I went out on my own until Dad decided to come and work for me – it seems there was no escape!

In addition to plastering, I have studied geology at RMIT and theology at Ridley College. I was also in sales and estimating in multicolour printing. My interests range from guitar (and what some kindly refer to as singing!), drawing, reading, and Tai Chi (I was an instructor for about 25 years).

In the church, prior to ordination, I have been involved in Alpha and other faith and discipleship courses, in intercession ministry, music, youth ministry, helping out in the Op shop, lay reading, running evening services – whatever needed doing, really. Since 2016 I have been Priest in Charge at Westernport.

I have a passion for encouraging people to continually go deeper in their relationship with the Lord, to have a willingness and the courage to ask questions – even awkward ones – to be able to read Scripture well and trust in God's will.

The Rev'd Dr Sallyanne Hart has been the long-term Locum Priest at Lakes / Metung since June 2022, and has given above and beyond in this capacity, supported more recently by Honorary Parish Deacon, The Rev'd Sue Newcombe, and throughout this period by the Lay Readers and lay leaders of the Parish. Sallyanne's faithful and fruitful ministry was acknowledged locally on 24 November, ahead of Colin's Induction on 5 December.

Please pray for the people of Westernport at this time, for Colin and Anthea in transition, and for Sallyanne, Sue, and the people of Lakes / Metung as new ministries unfold in God's good providence.

# New faces, changing roles



Krista Mountford, new TGA Editor and Diocesan Development Officer

## ■ Bishop Richard

### Double role for Krista Mountford

I am delighted to introduce Krista Mountford, who has recently joined the team in a dual capacity: as Diocesan Development Officer (DDO), and Editor of *The Gippsland Anglican*. Krista will be employed part-time (0.5) spread across these two roles. With Libby Willems (our inaugural DDO) having explored the overlap of that role with 'news ministry' (including *TGA*), the opportunity to bring the two positions together in a single appointment presents itself given Krista's skill set. Krista writes:

I am thrilled to be appointed to the roles of Diocesan Development Officer and Editor of *The Gippsland Anglican* for the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland. I'm currently pursuing a Bachelor of Journalism at the University of South Australia (online), and am keen to immerse myself in the vibrant Gippsland Anglican community through the DDO role, while also sharing news and reflections through *The Gippsland Anglican*.

Over the past nine years, I have worked in the non-profit sector, focusing on events, marketing, and communications. I enjoy collaborating with community-oriented organisations to develop impactful projects and events,

and so these two roles are a wonderful combination of my passions and experience.

During this time, I have organised various annual charity events, including a Girls' Weekend dedicated to women's health and wellness (next March will see the 11th of these), Christmas hampers and toy drives. I served on the steering committee for the 2021 Baw Baw Soup Kitchen Project, actively participate in the free weekly community meals at the Longwarry Public Hall, and am a member of the Gippsland Emergency Relief Network.

I am a proud parent to two wonderful boys, Connor (9) and Riley (11), and I am grateful to share this parenting journey with my husband, Andrew, an Auslan Educational Interpreter. We moved to Warragul six years ago and have truly embraced the friendly, vibrant community here.

I'm excited to learn more about the amazing work being done by the Gippsland parishes and ministry centres and to assist them in promoting their initiatives and fundraising efforts to support their vital community contributions.

In welcoming Krista, I take this opportunity to acknowledge the generosity of Jan Down, our Interim TGA Editor following Sally Woollett's retirement several months ago. The December edition is Jan's last in this important bridging ministry, and she and Krista have worked on this issue together during November by way of a handover. A former TGA Editor herself of course, Jan has also contributed a series of fascinating 'retrospectives' in this 120th year of *TGA's* continuous publication. Thank you Jan!

Krista will soon share responsibility for aspects of the website and social media with David Perryman, and will continue the good work begun by Libby in seeking philanthropic support for our 'Connecting in Service'. Welcome to the household of Gippsland Anglicans Krista!

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## Julie Lanham – a familiar face for Diocesan Clearance Officer role

I am very pleased to announce the appointment of Julie Lanham as our new Clearance Officer for the Diocese. Julie is well known to many of us for her pioneering work with husband, Rich Lanham, in visioning, establishing, and for six years successfully operating the social enterprise that was Café 123 in Sale.

Julie was an employee of the Diocese during that period, and has a proven administrative capacity alongside the ability to generate and test new ideas and processes.

Equally important with respect to this position is Julie's pastoral heart and gentle professional manner. Julie is committed to helping people feel safe, and the opportunity to work in the Safe Ministry space appeals to her.

At the Café I observed that it was Julie's ability to create an environment in which people from all backgrounds and with diverse needs felt included and cared for that made 123 such a beloved gathering place in the Wellington Shire – one which had a significant outreach ministry either side of and right throughout the Covid period.

For those who may not have met Julie yet, she introduces herself a little further here:

Hi, I'm Julie Lanham and have been living in Gippsland since 2012. My husband and family and I moved down from Gilgandra NSW, where we had worked in the community with the Bush Church Aid Society. We came to Sale in the first instance to work for the Cathedral Parish on the invitation of our dear friend, the late Bishop John McIntyre. Rich and I worked together at St Paul's with the youth.

I came to manage the 123 Café that Rich had birthed as a 'Fresh Expression' of church. The Café was a wonderful place to manage and I was proud of what we were able to accomplish. It helped solidify my thoughts around approaching people with love and kindness, free of judgement, and big on acceptance. And it helped me to practise this – which is, of course, an ongoing learning and relearning...

I have a heart for people and a passion for food which combine in a love of sharing life over a meal, and I am currently studying Commercial Cookery. I look forward to this new work with the Diocese and meeting everyone one either in person or over

the phone – happy to be seeing some old friends and meeting and making some new ones.

Julie will work two days a week and be the conduit between our parishes and ministry centres and the clearances arm of Kooyoora, and assist with the transition to the 'OSCA' platform in the months ahead. Further details as to how and when best to contact Julie, and the ways in which her role will facilitate the smoother running of the whole clearances process will follow in the coming weeks.

Welcome back to the team Julie!



Julie Lanham, new Diocesan Clearance Officer

## Wendy Mawoyo appointed to Parish Partnerships role with Anglicare Victoria

It was a pleasure to be on the interview panel for this important role connecting our parishes, op shops, schools, and other ministry centres with the work of Anglicare across our region, and to meet several outstanding candidates in the process.

Of these, Wendy emerged as the best all-round fit for this (0.5) position within Anglicare Victoria's staff team; a role previously held by Sarah Gover, Cathrine Muston (who still oversees the 'Get Out for Good' program across Victoria) and most recently Rich Lanham.

Wendy is a passionate community engagement leader with extensive experience in the community services sector. She has experience developing, coordinating, and delivering community development programs that empower and bring transformation to communities.

Wendy commented:



Wendy Mawoyo, newly appointed Community Development Support (Parish Partnerships) Coordinator for Anglicare Victoria

I'm looking forward to working with the parishes and hopefully making a difference in the Gippsland region. I'm aware of the many needs in the region and therefore expecting to see God's hand in the work that we do together. I believe with my perspective of empowering communities we can work together to birth projects that will do just that and support those that desperately need to see light in their lives.

Wendy brings enthusiasm and energy. We look forward to having her join AV in this role.



Les Ridge's caption in the parish newsletter: 'It wouldn't be a Grand Prix breakfast without a photo of our rector astride a premium two-wheeled steed. This time it's our freshly inducted rector, the Rev'd Ruth Hanlon, looking every inch the part on a six-pot Honda.'

New Rector of Bass / Phillip Island, The Rev'd Ruth Hanlon, was quickly astride an unusual ministry task, as once again the Parish provided breakfasts for the Grand Prix visitors.

■ Ann Prideaux

Ruth's involvement in the breakfasts went far beyond a pic on a bike. It was more like 'ministry in the moment'. During the four-day event she met, shared and prayed with customers as was their need and request.

Along with the fundraising aspect of the breakfasts it was an opportunity to witness to the wider community; something of the example set by Jesus in terms of gracious service.

Prior to the weekend, members of the team gathered, along with the Thursday morning congregation, to pray for not only safety for the race and of course lots of customers, but above all, that they should witness an example of servanthood, showing God's love in the way in which they operated.

The Rev'd Erena Norfolk, team leader, was given a special blessing during the

service. Weeks of planning, and no doubt a few sleepless nights, go hand in hand with such an endeavour.

Thirty-five volunteers, comprising parishioners and members of the wider community, served 258 meals to visitors and 60 meals to volunteers who were rewarded after their shift with a hearty breakfast.

From humble beginnings, these breakfasts have served the visitors to the island, along with some locals, for about 35 years I'm told. The event had its beginnings in a shed with four frypans and two double adaptors out the back. It now has access to a fully equipped professional kitchen, updated in recent years through the generosity of the Bendigo Bank.

Many who travel from all over the country are repeat customers and they often share their experience with others.

A cyclist from Far North Queensland reported how he stopped at a cafe in Northern NSW where he had seen several bikes lined up. He conveyed to them that they must get their breakfast at the Phillip Island church hall, as it was the best value in town!

Bikers from Tasmania enjoyed talking with Ruth's husband Michael, who had moved from there just six weeks earlier.

The team were resplendent in their new aprons, decorated carefully by warden Janet Bell with suitable checked pockets, designed to hold the order books perfectly.

A comment of, 'brilliant as usual' was not uncommon, as well-fed customers left.

\$20 for a full breakfast with the ability to customise or 'Breckie with The Lot' were excellent value and always served with a smile.

## Reach out to our rural readership

From Nar Nar Goon to the border, *The Gippsland Anglican* is distributed to parishes across our region.

Contact us about sharing your advertising message or for a copy of our media card.

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# Hope for us

## ■ Keren Terpstra

At this time of year, we turn our minds to Bethlehem, painfully aware of the violence and conflict at this time in that part of the world, as in other places.

The themes of Advent which are often commemorated with the lighting of the Advent candles each week have never been more relevant (or seemed more distant): hope, peace, joy, love. We light these candles and pick up on these themes because they point to the One who is the embodiment of them all, the One whose coming is certain and whose Day draws near: Jesus, God with us; Jesus, hope for us.

## HOPE25

It's no accident that hope is the first theme we're invited to reflect on, setting the overall tone for the season (and perhaps, as we're preparing for Hope25, for the year!). Hope is intrinsically related to faith, sharing with faith a 'looking forward', or expectation. On the first Sunday of Advent, we look forward in hope to the celebration of the First Coming of the Christ which is about salvation, and also reflect on the hope we have in the Second Coming of our Lord. Hope refuses to get stuck in the dark despair of what is, drawing into the present the light that already shines on the horizon.

Hope also leads us to act as if we were already living in the new reality.

Jesus, Emmanuel, is already with us, and we have the 'downpayment' of the Spirit already within us, endowing us with all the Spirit's good gifts so that we can live God's way and share the goodness of God's mercy with others.

I wonder how our communities might be transformed if we were able to speak of the hope we have – hope that God walks with us, that there will be an answer to sin and death and darkness and despair, and that that hope spurs us to take concrete action now. That hope is manifest through what we do and what we say; we embody or incarnate it, just as Jesus, God with us, is the icon or image of the invisible God. In this Advent season, may people look at us and see a qualitative difference in our lives, the difference that hope makes.

The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra is  
Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, Sale.

## ACTinG prays for creation

Via Zoom:

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9.30am – 10 am

Last Tuesday of the month

Led by The Rev'd Cathy Turnbull

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The Gippsland Diocese has been blessed with the generosity of Anglicans and others in support of its mission. One form of support you can offer is a bequest in your will – to the Diocese, your own parish or for a particular purpose.

To find out more, visit [www.gippslandanglicans.org.au](http://www.gippslandanglicans.org.au) and search 'bequests', or contact Richard Connelly (03 5144 2044).

*Always consult a solicitor when preparing or amending your will.*

# No room in the inn – but a welcome at Cunnamulla

The very striking St Alban's Anglican Church, built 1963. The original 1896 church can be seen in the left-hand corner. It was converted to a hall when the new church was built.

## ■ Libby Willems

'It never rains in Birdsville in July' they said. Famous last words as John, Calvin and I stopped around barefoot in the mud of the clay pan at the foot of Big Red sand dune on our winter caravan holiday to The Big Red Bash – the world's most remote music festival.

The unseasonal Queensland rain this July had met us first at Birdsville, Queensland, then afterwards further north at Bedourie where, for the first time ever, the camel races we had gone to see were raced without their cameliers (riders) because of the danger of an accident on the wet, slippery track.

The rain had closed the dirt roads heading south so we found ourselves diverting 1000 kilometres to stay on the bitumen roads through Winton and Longreach to find our way home to Victoria. By sheer bad luck, that rain band moved with us all through Queensland.

The road closures meant that literally thousands of caravans were now trekking towards the same towns along the main highways and people like us were calling every caravan park to try and find a place to stay. Big places like Longreach were not a problem, but when we found out, after seven hours of driving, that the road to our camping ground near Cunnamulla, Kunja Country, was closed, we were in a pickle.

'We're full up, and so is the other caravan park' we were told by the operator who answered the phone. 'Your best bet is the truck rest stop on the edge of town'.

We went and had a look but without a toilet, and with our teenage passenger sleeping in a swag outside the caravan, we were not comfortable camping there.

We began getting creative with trying to find a safe and somewhat dry patch of ground to pull up for the night. The puddles were everywhere on that flat country. We called motels asking if we could pull in on their parking area. 'I'll need permission from the manager who isn't here,' said one. We thought about camping in the town park, but again, that did not feel like a safe option for our swag-sleeping teen.

Night was closing in, and we had nowhere safe to pull up. These unexpected challenges were already taking a toll; I had not expected a completely relaxing holiday but I never anticipated being so challenged by the weather.

I reached a mental breaking point. I could not find a solution for our problem. As can happen in these moments, my thoughts went to worst case scenarios and I suddenly felt an overwhelming need to be home in Gippsland. I didn't want to be stuck in outback Queensland with no place to stay.

Then it struck me – in all our driving about town to find a place, we had passed by a fancy-looking church many times. I soon found out it was St Alban's Anglican church. Surely I would be able to get permission to pull into the car park there. Minutes later, John was on the phone to Merryl, the Church Warden who was going to meet us at St Alban's. Hallelujah! The relief to me was intense.

'Would you like to stay in the hall?' Merryl asked. I think my jaw actually dropped open with this unexpected offer. It was far more than we needed but was so very welcome. 'Just drop the keys

back to me at the newsagency tomorrow morning and make yourself at home.'

The hall meant we could sit in warmth and light, heat our meal in an oven and relax and rest properly. It meant Calvin could sleep safely indoors and we could charge our phones. We were even able to play a happy game of Scrabble.

'Merryl the Cunnamulla Angel' is how I stored her number in my phone. The keys were returned the next day along with a card and gift for the church for its pastoral and material care for us. We left Cunnamulla better than when we arrived.

It made me laugh out loud to see some parallels with the nativity story. I had the strangest sense of understanding more clearly what it might have been like for Joseph and Mary arriving in Bethlehem along with thousands of other travellers. Perhaps they arrived later because Mary needed rest stops due to her pregnancy. Perhaps there was no place to stay simply because of the number of visitors. I can more clearly imagine the distress of not knowing where it was safe to stay. Perhaps that stress and uncertainty contributed to Mary's labour that evening? Did Mary long to be back at home too? I can imagine that the offer of the stable was as welcome to them as the St Alban's car park was to us on a winter's night.

The comfort of not being alone with our problem in a strange town was enormous. I doubt that Merryl understands how she created a little piece of God's kingdom that night as she helped us in our vulnerable state. When we needed a neighbour she was there. St Alban's was there. Jesus was there.



# Embracing the future: The Abbey's A-Frame Appeal

## ■ Cath Connelly

Part of my daily prayer practice is to stand outside, feeling earth, air, fire and water surround me as I reach behind for the wisdom I received yesterday and then reach forward to embrace the future. This practice comes to me as I reflect on this liminal time between the old year and the new.

The wisdom of the past year at The Abbey brings back friendships, retreats, silence, Hush days, craft days, laughter, good food, Eucharists, prayer, music sessions, concerts, conferences and working bees. All these – and so much more – held in this most beautiful location where hospitality, spirituality and the environment meet.

As I reflect on all that The Abbey has prepared for the future, I feel excited. We have a full program of events that we hope you find enticing. Check out [www.theabbey.org.au](http://www.theabbey.org.au) to see what is ahead. We also have the wider community booking our facilities as a venue for their own programs. Fundraising for the A-Frame renovations continue, and the Chapter and Abbey staff continue to craft this place into the thriving centre it is.

The Abbey A-Frame Appeal has two stages. The primary task is to give the A-Frame building itself a much-needed complete renovation. After sixty years, she is tired. We will be installing toilets and showers, providing insulation (currently there is no insulation!), acoustic sound barriers and double-glazed artistic windows. The walls will be painted, the floor will be repaired, the kitchen will be improved.

Not limiting our improvements to the A-Frame interior, the courtyard between the A-Frame and the Admin building will have a purpose-built barbeque, seating and shade sails, making this an extended community space for gatherings and socialising.

Our second stage of the Abbey A-Frame Appeal is to improve the accommodation. We will be removing the two bunk-room / cabins and the amenities building. They're great for memories of youth camps, but pretty basic as an accommodation option. In their place, we will build five or six accommodation hubs, each providing sleeping for about ten people, with their own bathroom and kitchen facilities. These will be perfect for small groups to hire, whether that's school camps or for conference accommodation.

Behind this project is the two-fold understanding that firstly, we have a most special environment here at The Abbey and secondly, we do not currently have the facilities to make the best use of this location. Once this project is completed, The Abbey will be a venue where members of our Diocese and the wider community will comfortably hold church and community events. We are happy to talk with you about how your tax-deductible donations can be part of this exciting project.

The Abbey is about welcome, about finding space amidst beauty, of stepping into the thin place where the veil between realms is gossamer thin. This truly is your place; the doors are always open for you to come find a home here.

For further information, please contact Anna at the Abbey:  
(03) 5156 6580, [info@theabbey.org.au](mailto:info@theabbey.org.au)

## Save the date



For further information, please contact Anna at the Abbey: (03) 5156 6580, [info@theabbey.org.au](mailto:info@theabbey.org.au)

### DECEMBER

12 *Hush* Quiet Day: Come Apart to Be a Part.  
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### JANUARY / FEBRUARY

31, 1, 2 Celtic Spirituality Retreat:  
Facilitator: Cath Connelly  
The full list of programs for 2025  
can be found at [www.theabbey.org.au](http://www.theabbey.org.au)

# Keeping Christ at the centre



■ Carol Monson asks some Warragul church families what they do to keep Christ at the centre of Christmas.

**Stacey Kearney**  
Children's Outreach Co-ordination

Working in a church, it might seem easy to keep Christmas focused on Jesus, but it's often a challenge. At home, the season's logistics – presents, meals, family gatherings, and school concerts – can easily overshadow the heart of Christmas. So, as a mother committed to helping my kids understand the true glory of Christmas, we've made some changes.

A few years ago, we decided as a family to remove all Santa decorations from our Christmas tree and to place nativity scenes throughout our home. These help us focus on the miracle of Jesus' birth. Together, we also pack Christmas Shoeboxes (distributed to children in need), a reminder of how blessed we are and how we can bless others. Most importantly, we make attending church on Christmas Day a priority. No matter how busy the day is, we go to church and talk as a family about the difference Jesus makes in our lives, even if it means an early start to prepare breakfast and lunch before the kids wake.

**James McArdle, SALT Club member**

My family keeps Jesus at the centre of Christmas by having or watching a church service before we open our presents and by participating in other Christmas services like the kids' service. Also, we celebrate Jesus' birthday on Christmas instead of Santa bringing presents.

**Elizabeth Barber**

Christmas is not always easy for us to celebrate. Family sadness can draw close, but every new generation expresses fresh joy.

The Christmas box comes out. Carols commence. We ceremoniously decorate the tree. Gingerbread men and houses are decorated. Children jump for joy at the changing vista in the street. There is expectation. Where is Jesus?

For some, Father Christmas is at the centre. But our Father Christmas is our almighty God, who gifted to us, through grace, a baby, born of Mary.

I celebrate Christmas with my grandchildren who look at me with joy. I see their trusting faith. The story of a baby is retold. I have told them the Bible tells us so. We say grace at the Christmas table. We look ahead with hope. Where Christmas exists with that taint of loss we look to the children and see the spark of hope.

**Barbara McCamley**

Christmas is a time of thankfulness and reflection as the story of Jesus' birth is retold in messages, pageants and singing of carols. Children are excited as the Advent calendar counts down.

I reflect on the simplicity of the manger where Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph's faith and obedience to God and the indescribable gift of Jesus. Praises are sung and presents given – a King was born.

**Connor Kearney, 14 years old and member of Youth Group**

Keeping Jesus in Christmas is about remembering why we celebrate. It's easy to get caught up in the shopping, decorations, and gifts, but Christmas started with Jesus. To keep him at the centre, we can read the story of his birth and think about what it means. Going to a Christmas church service or singing carols can also help us feel connected to him.

Another way to honour Jesus is by helping others, just like he did. Volunteering, donating to those in need, or even just being kind can make a huge difference. Christmas is all about spreading love and kindness, and focusing on that brings us closer to Jesus' message.

If we spend time with family and talk about what Christmas really means, we keep the holiday meaningful. Keeping Jesus in Christmas reminds us, it's not just about gifts, it's about celebrating the love and hope he brought to the world.

**Roshini Blanchard, 9 years old and SALT Club member**

My family thinks about the presents part of Christmas as a way of celebrating Jesus' birthday because we can't physically give presents to Jesus like any other birthday, so we give them to each other instead. We want to give him presents because he has done so much for us so we want to give something back as a way to say thank you to him. We put a nativity scene on top of our piano. We also read the Christmas Story and sing church songs about Jesus.



# Maffra students serve up hope

Four students in the Vocational Major (formerly VCAL) stream at Maffra Secondary College have completed a project to plan, cook and deliver 'meals on wheels' to hungry people in Maffra.

Harry Redfern, Kaleb Blake, Tyler Evans and Alex Whitehead worked together with support from VM teacher Lashay Tricker, to identify an issue in the local community. This group worked on the issue around the current cost of living. They then formed a partnership with St John's Anglican Church, working together to gain approval, seek donations, organise and set timelines and execute their project. Additional support for the project was supplied in the form of donations of meat and other ingredients from Maffco Brewery and Distillery.

Having initially reached out to partner with St John's Maffra, they delivered over 150 frozen meals (far more than the parish was expecting) which were divided between the freezers at the church and at the Maffra Neighbourhood House, for use in emergency food relief. Some of the people who attend the free monthly community meal at St John's will also receive a few extra meals right away, with the rest of the meals forming a substantial food-bank to be used as



The Rector of Maffra, The Rev'd Dr Tim Gaden, and Maffra Secondary College students Kaleb Blake and Harry Redfern stack the parish's freezer with pre-cooked meals

the need arises.

This initiative from the students has kick-started a bigger collaboration in emergency relief between St John's and

the Neighbourhood House, which will widen to include working together in other forms of community support, especially as Christmas approaches.

# Korumburra teddy gets to watch from the box

■ Sue Wilson

How blessed I was to be in the front pew that morning, because from there I had a side-on view of the Christmas shoe boxes loaded onto the trolley and awaiting their blessing.

Most of the boxes were secured with an elastic band because often it is not an entirely successful work of art to fit everything in. The doll's arms are firmly at her side, teddy has a pencil sharpener squashed into his nose, the toy will sit this way but not that. Consequently, the lid seems not to want to lie flat.

The box on the bottom shelf of the trolley had indeed popped open and there smiling up at me throughout the service was a beautifully knitted little girl teddy. She lay quietly enjoying the singing and being a part of the show. Her woolly button eyes watched The Rev'd David as he gave his blessing. She saw some of the faces of those who had done



Teddy watching from one of the Operation Christmas Child shoe boxes filled with gifts for children in need around the world

the shopping and the packing.

When next the lid pops open and she sees the light of day those eyes will be

warm with God's love for a little girl or little boy and empty hands will reach in to receive it.

# Rich history: St David's Toongabbie celebrates 140th

L-R: Canon Jeff Richardson (former Rector of Traralgon), The Rev'd Janet Wallace (Associate Priest at Traralgon), Archdeacon Clem Watts (former Rector of Traralgon), Bishop Richard, Archdeacon Sue Jacka, The Rev'd Gradwell Fredericks (current Rector of Traralgon), The Rev'd Marilyn Obersby (former Locum of Traralgon), Peter Wallis (Lay Reader) and Sarah Gover (Lay Reader)

■ Emily Beaverstock

On the 27th of October 2024, St David's Toongabbie marked a significant milestone, celebrating its 140th anniversary. The event was a heartfelt gathering, with over 70 attendees coming together to honour the church's rich history and community spirit.

The service was led by Father Gradwell Fredericks, Bishop Richard Treloar and Sarah Gover. Bishop Richard delivered an interesting sermon, focusing on the theme of sacrificial giving during October's Season of Giving. He also shared some fascinating insights into the church's history, adding depth to the occasion.

A highlight of the celebration was the unveiling of a new banner. This beautifully crafted banner features a cross, a lamb, and representations of three parishes that have been associated with St David's over the years: Rosedale, Heyfield, and Traralgon, which is St David's current parish. The lamb is particularly special as its photograph was taken from the local area.

Following the service, attendees enjoyed refreshments provided by the Wellington Latrobe Lions Club at the Toongabbie Mechanic's Hall. This was a fitting end to the celebration, offering a chance for attendees to enjoy each other's company. Some historic documents were

also on display, creating an opportunity for people to reflect on their shared history, and look forward to the future with hope and unity.

The 140th anniversary celebration of St David's Toongabbie was not just a commemoration of the past, but also a celebration of the present and a hopeful look towards the future. The church, which has been a cornerstone of the community for well over a century, continues to be a place of worship, fellowship and service. The event was a testament to the enduring legacy of St David's and its importance to the people of Toongabbie and the surrounding areas.



Mark Woods at the organ

Do you have a question, comment or concern?

Let us know!



# Avon Family Fun Fair

In his words of welcome at 10am, Parish Priest Dave Perryman acknowledged the Gunai Kurnai people as the original inhabitants of this land. He went on to say that 'churches are always at their best when they enrich the lives of those in the community around them and this is one of the ways we can give back to our community'. He then introduced Mr Joel Brayshaw, Principal of Stratford's St Patrick's Primary School, to officially open the Fair.

Many families enjoyed the day of free children's activities, barbecue lunch, giveaways and a variety of stalls, including the cake and plant stalls. A trackless train, ukulele group, Animals On The Move, face painting and the CFA presence contributed to what was a wonderful day of community enjoyment. After lunch, there was a sausage eating competition!

The morning Pet Show was well supported this year with local vet, Dr Steve Postlethwaite, as a judge facing some challenging decisions! Pets included two goats, a yabbie, a stick insect and a wide variety of dogs. Each entrant received a personalized certificate with an appropriate pet prize courtesy of the two Maffra vets.

The Fair offered a family friendly day which is so important with the current cost of living crisis affecting families.

A rewarding and busy day for all involved!

■ **Gail Wager**

The 2024 Family Fun Fair was held on 12th October and was blessed with almost perfect spring weather with sun and little wind. No rain!! The organising committee had been working tirelessly for many months and everything had fallen into place as parishioners arrived early on the day to finish setting up the Holy Trinity Stratford precinct.

The Parish, as always, is grateful to sponsors Wellington Shire Council, Marathon Electrical, and the Stratford Scouts (on the barbecue) for their support.



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## IMAGINING CHURCHES OF THE FUTURE

In these last pages for TGA's 120th series, we take a look forward. Jude Benton, Priest-in-Charge at Mallacoota, and Scarlett, Gippsland Grammar prefect, paint different future pictures of church. (See also the editorial on p19.)

# Polarized on size, less denominational divide

## ■ Jude Benton

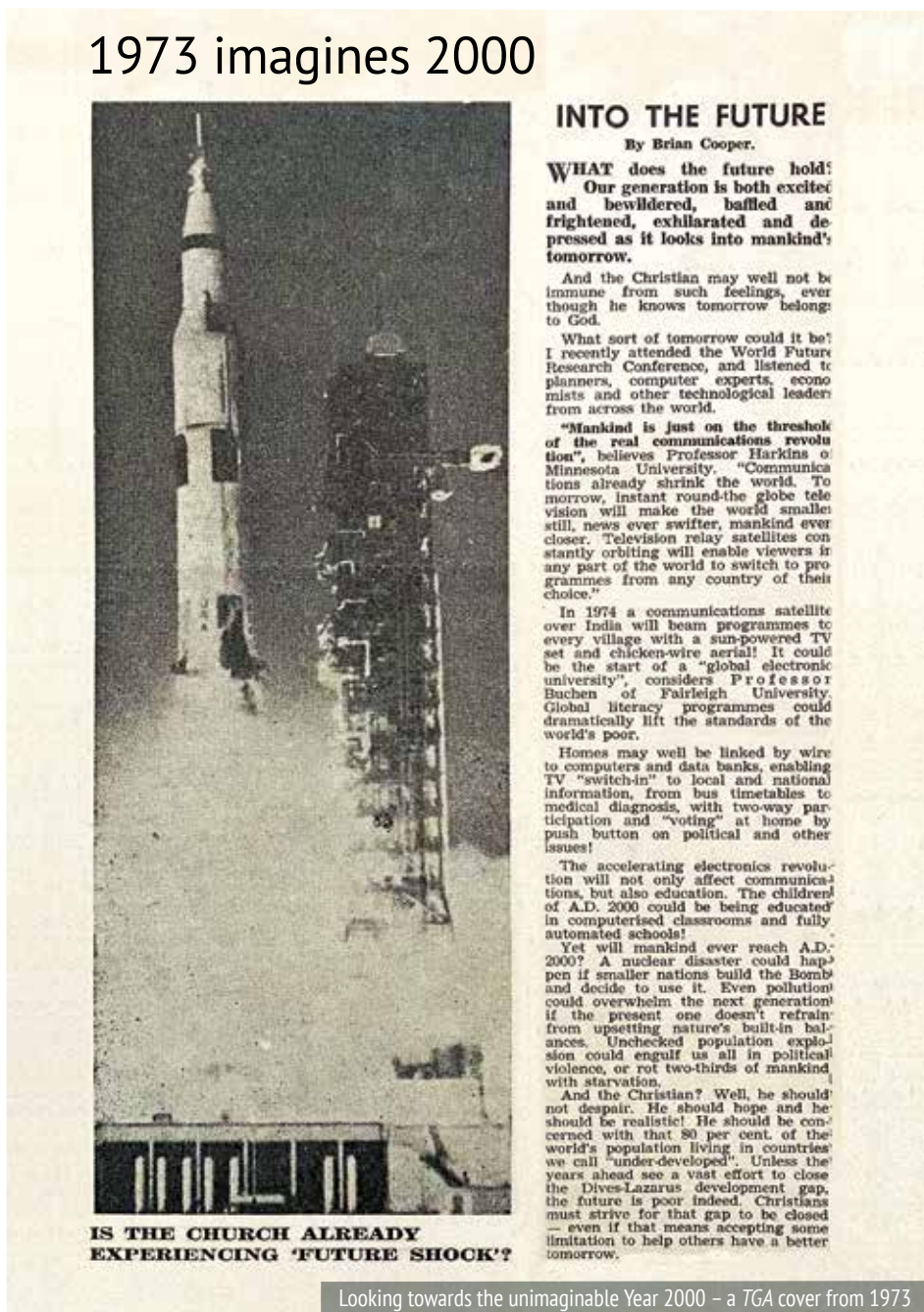
In October 2023 St Peter's Mallacoota celebrated 50 years since the opening of the church building. As a part of the celebrations, guests at the dinner were invited to write a hope or prayer for the next 50 years. It was heartening to hear hopes like, 'the church still being here,' or 'the church being bigger, packed to standing room only,' or 'still having a lively, engaged minister.'

When St Peter's was built, it was built by the community to be the only church in the town of Mallacoota. Officially a cooperation of Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist (before the Uniting Church formed), the Catholics have also used the building the entire time. It was a remarkable act of inter-denominational cooperation for the 1970's – but one born out of a financial and communal reality as to how a church congregation could maintain a building in such a small town.

When I look 50 years into the church's future, I have no doubt that more church congregations will be similarly interdenominational. For younger Christians the labels of denominations mean so little in comparison to their significance for those who've gone before. Churches are chosen more for how 'at home' someone feels, how their family is catered for, the style of worship, or the quality of teaching, rather than the label on the door. As various congregations decline and buildings are sold, one would hope Christian cooperation would occur to maintain a worshipping community in each town, rather than desperately trying to hold on to an 'Anglican' (or any other) identity.

The last few decades have seen the growth of the mega-church movement, particularly amongst young people in cities. Covid provided a platform for the acceptance of participating via live-streaming, and this has had a flow-on impact in even the most remote areas with people choosing to 'attend' large city churches rather than small local ones. In 50 years, I can see the church community becoming more polarized between the two extremes of mega-church or small home-style gatherings that provide for intentional social connection.

Census statistics remind us that Australia continues to be a place of growing immigration of people of other cultures



Looking towards the unimaginable Year 2000 – a TGA cover from 1973

and religions. It also shows us that the number of those adhering to the Christian faith continues to decline. In 50 years, Christianity may well be a minority religion in Australia. But this in turn could result in a greater clarity of belief and conviction of those who profess the Christian faith. When we look internationally and see the growth of Christianity in places where they are the minority, we see passion, prayer and mission in a way that inspires and challenges.

50 years ago the TGA article (pictured here) looking into the future began by

saying, 'our generation is both excited and bewildered, baffled and frightened, exhilarated and depressed, as it looks into mankind's tomorrow'. These words are just as true today. Perhaps the greatest contribution churches and Christians can make, is to continue to proclaim the hope of Christ who brings the light in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The Rev'd Jude Benton is Priest-in-Charge in the Parish of Croajingolong.

# Church under the sky in 2044



■ **Scarlett, a prefect at Gippsland Grammar School, imagines a future church.**

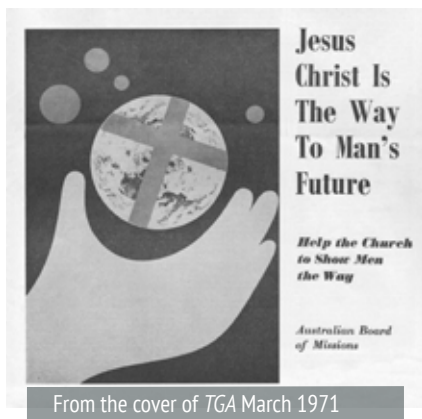
It's a Sunday in 2044, and I'm walking towards a little open-air amphitheatre tucked into a green valley. Many Christians meet here now, under the sky and trees, rather than the walls of church. It's a nice break from the now industrialised nature of the world. People of all ages, races and nations gather under the warm sun. A projector whirs in the background, castings images of other members onto the thick foliage around, worshippers attending via video call.

We stand and sing together, robotic voices over Zoom, combining with the rich voices of many nations. Traditional hymns and prayers haven't changed much over the years, people holding onto what is familiar in an ever-changing technological world. The air is filled with a sense of unity, a reminder that despite the complex nature of modern life, the essence of faith remains a powerful, timeless force that brings people together.

After the service we share meals together, cooking under the stars, observing God's graciousness as he continues to invite us to thrive on this earth.

## 1982 remembers 1969: Moon Communion

Many of us remember the astronauts reading from the Bible on Christmas Eve as they sped towards the moon, but I suspect that few of us knew what Buzz Aldrin, a devout Episcopalian, relates below:



On the day of the moon landing, we awoke at 5.30am, Houston time. Neil and I separated from Mike Collins in the command module. Our powered descent was right on schedule. With only seconds worth of fuel left, we touched down at 3.30pm... Now was the moment for Communion.

So I unstowed the elements in their flight packets. I put them and the Scripture reading in the little table in front of the abort guidance system computer. Then I called back to Houston. 'Houston, this is Eagle. This LM Pilot speaking. I would like to request a few moments of silence. I would like to invite each person listening in, wherever and whomever he may be, to contemplate for a moment the events of the past few hours and to give thanks in his own individual way.'

For me, this meant taking Communion. In the blackout I opened the little plastic packages which contained bread and wine. I poured wine into the chalice my parish had given me. In the one-sixth gravity of the moon, the wine curled slowly and gracefully up the cup. It was interesting to think that the very

first liquid ever poured on the moon, and the first food eaten there, were consecrated elements.

Just before I partook of the elements, I read the words which I had chosen to indicate our trust that as man probes into space, we are in fact acting in Christ. I sensed especially strongly my unity with our church back home, and with the Church everywhere.

I read, 'I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, and I in him, will bear much fruit; for you can do nothing without me'.

Buzz Aldrin, Guideposts (taken from the *Anglican Digest*).

From TGA December 1982



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■ **Lindy Driver, Gippsland Mothers Union President, reports on a week spent in Papua New Guinea visiting the newly developed Modawa Institute for Higher Education with her husband Bishop Jeffrey Driver, the Acting Principal.**

It had been five years since I visited PNG with Jeff, and I was totally amazed by the changes. There was a newly built health clinic – the old one was a death trap – and classrooms had been expanded. The timber for construction was taken from the local grounds, with the milling and building carried out by the workers there.

I was joined by Robin Ray, the Australian President of Mothers Union, and we had a time of blessing and learning with the Modawa Institute's MU group. A special moment was when Robin and I handed out MU badges we had brought from Australia to give to the women who couldn't afford to buy one themselves.

We also spent time with some of the MU members in Popondetta – some walking or coming by canoe from as much as several hours away with only 24 hours' notice. We were greeted with song and dance, gifts and a beautiful lunch.

We visited their sewing room, where they make items to sell. Robin and I were both given an outfit and of course we then each purchased another outfit to assist them in their ministry.

We also had the opportunity to meet with the women working at the St Margaret's Health Education Facility near the Diocesan Offices, where Robin would be spending more time the following week.

Later, we met with Mother Felicity, the Bishop's wife, and some of the representatives from the Clergy Wives group. Once again, we were presented with gifts.

One of the planned events of this visit was the opening of the David Hand



Dr Gen Nelson, Director of the Kokoda Trust Foundation and Penny Morton, representative of the Australian High Commissioner to PNG, turning the first sod for the new teaching and nursing dormitories



L-R: Lindy Driver (President of MU, Diocese of Gippsland), staff member Molly, Robin Ray (MU Australian President), Mother Step (MU Zone C Trustee Elect)

Teachers College. Unfortunately, due to the Governor of Oro's being unable to attend, the official opening was delayed. Instead, we celebrated the ground-breaking ceremony for two new, twenty bed dormitories and amenities for women. This is where they will live as they study in the college to become teachers in 2025. It will also provide accommodation later in the year for students at the new St Margaret's School of Nursing.

Representatives of the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby and from the Kokoda Track Foundation were all in attendance. In a break with tradition, the ground-breaking was carried out by two women: Dr Gen Nelson, Director of the Kokoda Track Foundation, and Penny Morton, the Australian High Commission's representative to PNG. Jeff, in his speech, referred to the moment as 'breaking the good soil of hope'.

This will be the first teachers college in Oro Province. Change is happening and it is truly a time for celebration.



# Synchrony

■ Daniel Lowe

I am not much of a dancer, and I generally don't enjoy dancing because it makes me feel incredibly self-conscious and embarrassed. That said, I wish I could dance, or at least find the self-confidence to attempt it despite my ineptitude.

I've seen some very impressive individual dancing at school events over the years, but it is those moments when everyone joins in with the same dance moves that really stand out for me. Whether it is to the Nutbush or the Grease Megamix, there is something remarkable about watching a group of people move in unison to the beat of a song.

I may not be a dancer, but I am a drummer and I do take great delight in that feeling of locking into a rhythm and playing in perfect sync with it. Even better if I am surrounded by other musicians who are locked into the same beat. I have noticed over the years that we seem to be getting worse at staying in time together. This is purely anecdotal – I have no solid research to support the claim – but listening to large groups of students clapping along to songs in School chapels and assemblies, I am sure they find it harder now to clap in time with each other and to the music than the students of ten or twenty years ago. If I am right (and I may not be), I can't help but wonder why that might be and whether it matters beyond the unsettling of my musical sensibilities.

Enter the concept of synchrony.

What is synchrony? To quote award winning science journalist, Lydia Denworth, 'When we find ourselves nodding at the

same time as our conversation partner or smiling together when we watch a funny movie, that's synchrony. When we clap our hands in unison with others during a concert or while happily playing with our child, that's synchrony.'

That is what synchrony looks like but what is actually going on inside our brains when this happens and why is it important? Denworth goes on to explain it this way:

Collective neuroscience, as some practitioners call it, is a rapidly growing field of research. An early, consistent finding is that when people converse or share an experience, their brain waves synchronize. Neurons in corresponding locations of the different brains fire at the same time, creating matching patterns, like dancers moving together. Auditory and visual areas respond to shape, sound and movement in similar ways, whereas higher-order brain areas seem to behave similarly during more challenging tasks such as making meaning out of something seen or heard.

The experience of 'being on the same wavelength' as another person is real, and it is visible in the activity of the brain... Without synchrony and the deeper forms of connection that lie beyond it, we may be at greater risk for mental instability and poor physical health. With synchrony and other levels of neural

interaction, humans teach and learn, forge friendships and romances, and cooperate and converse. We are driven to connect, and synchrony is one way our brains help us do it. (*Scientific American*: [tinyurl.com/46hkmmzy](http://tinyurl.com/46hkmmzy))

I love it when science and faith reach the same conclusion about something. Our human drive to connect makes perfect sense from a Christian view of humanity which understands people as relational beings made in the image of a relational God. So, from both a scientific and a theological perspective, relationships are important, and communication is an integral part of relationships. How we communicate shapes the way we relate to each other. And this is where synchrony and modern communication methods collide.

Social psychologist, Jonathan Haidt, whom I have quoted in previous articles, has a lot to say about the impact of mobile phones and social media as a primary means of communication for young people. Jon Schaff gives a helpful summary of Haidt's concerns in a recent blog post:

Why does the omnipresence of such portable technology matter, especially for mental health? We must make a distinction between the 'real world' and 'virtual world'. The real world, says Haidt, is embodied, consisting of experiences that are synchronous (happening right now) and having some level of intimacy. They also 'take place within communities that

giving people incentive to invest in the relationship, and forgiving and repairing relationships when they hit rough spots.

By contrast, the virtual world is disembodied. In fact, some participants might be AI. It is asynchronous, as communication is typically through posts and comments. Also, communication is 'one-to-many', meaning it is directed towards a mass of people with whom we lack any actual personal relationship. Finally, virtual communities are unstable in that relationships are easily entered into and easily broken.

The lack of intimate embodied human relationships contributes toward poor mental health. The nature of the online world tends to draw young people within themselves, neglecting real world experiences they need to develop into emotionally healthy, responsible individuals, while simultaneously addicting them to the very virtual world that contributes to their anxiety and depression.

(Front Porch Republic:  
<https://tinyurl.com/yvpxs4f9/>)

Does this mean all electronic communication is bad? Of course not! Asynchronous communication (the opposite to synchronous) can be very useful for many things but what it won't do is build relational connections in the same way that synchronous communication does. Perhaps this goes a long way towards explaining why millennials and Gen Z are often described as simultaneously the most connected and the loneliest of generations.

The challenge, of course, is trying to explain this to your 11-year-old who is desperately begging for access to Instagram or Snapchat or TikTok. Neither a science lesson on synchrony nor a theology lecture on the relational nature of God will carry much weight against the social pressure of peers. One thing schools can do is to provide opportunities for students to experience synchronous communication. Which brings me back to clapping out of time in assembly.

Chapels, assemblies, year level assemblies and other group gatherings are a regular part of life at an Anglican school. These events serve a range of purposes but one which is not always obvious is the opportunity they provide

to connect with each other in an embodied and synchronous way – in other words, to foster the developmental growth that synchronous experiences promote. Encouraging students to sing together, to clap in time, to laugh together at a witty joke or to share a moment of silent awe after a powerful performance, these are the things that help our students form connections in ways their Insta feeds never will.

The writer of Hebrews was obviously not thinking about social media when they penned these words, but they carry a fresh weight of truth in this modern era: 'We should think about each other to see how we can encourage each other to show love and do good works. We must not quit meeting together, as some are doing. No, we need to keep on encouraging each other.' (Hebrews 10:24-25 ERV)

May you and yours experience the mysterious joy of synchrony with each other and with the God who made himself known to us in embodied form in the person of Jesus.

---

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



Daniel Lowe playing drums

## From the Interim Editor



It is early morning, but the sun is already hot – as it always is now. The little wooden church where we meet is at least partly shaded by a large oak tree, kept alive in this long drought through the forethought of a previous generation who installed massive underground water tanks back in 2025. The tanks also keep the vegetable gardens and fruit trees going.

People thought those church members were crazy back then, at least to start with. They couldn't see what was coming. Those who planned and planted couldn't be sure either, how things would pan out, but they went ahead anyway, and thank God they did. It helped save our town; as the ideas caught on, more people grew food, learned to make clothes and shoes at the church hub and started small businesses. So when the container ships stopped delivering all our goods and the trucks stopped coming to fill our supermarket shelves it wasn't as big a disaster as it could have been.

## An eye to the future: church, world and TGA

There are more people in church than there were back then. It was a natural progression, as they got to know church people in the workshops or the produce market. Believing in God no longer seemed so ridiculous.

Having a vision to work towards is what shoves me out the door with hope (Rebecca Solnit's expression, quoted by Bishop Richard on p2 last month). A hope that grows out of faith in Christ, who died and rose and will come again to make all things new. Out of that soil of faith comes the hope of growing something better together – a church literally earthed – where the spiritual and material worlds are re-integrated, and we can share the hope we have in Jesus while we're picking tomatoes and basil.

In this last edition of the 120th year of TGA, we have looked back at the early history of the coming of European people to the land of the Gunaikurnai people (and all that meant); the planting and growth of Anglican churches; the building of Bishops Court and The Abbey; changes in music styles, transport, children's ministry and mission. We have seen how God

continues to work through flawed and faithful people.

Looking to the future of TGA, you may have noticed this magazine feels slightly thinner. You are right; we have reduced the number of pages from 24 to 20, partly in response to Synod's request to Bishop-in-Council that we look for ways to contain production costs. This will be an experiment, so we will value your feedback.

It has been a privilege to be back in the Editor's chair for these three editions, and I am now delighted to hand over to the very capable Krista Mountford. She will produce her first TGA in February 2025. I am deeply thankful to Sally Woollett, our previous Editor, for her unstinting help as I have come to grips with new technology and systems, to our designer Juli Devine for her patience and creative flair, and to Bishop Richard and Sue Jacka for their constant support, encouragement and brilliant proofreading.

Long may TGA continue to be the high quality publication for which Gippsland is well-known, to the glory of God and the equipping of God's people.

Jan Down

## EVENTS

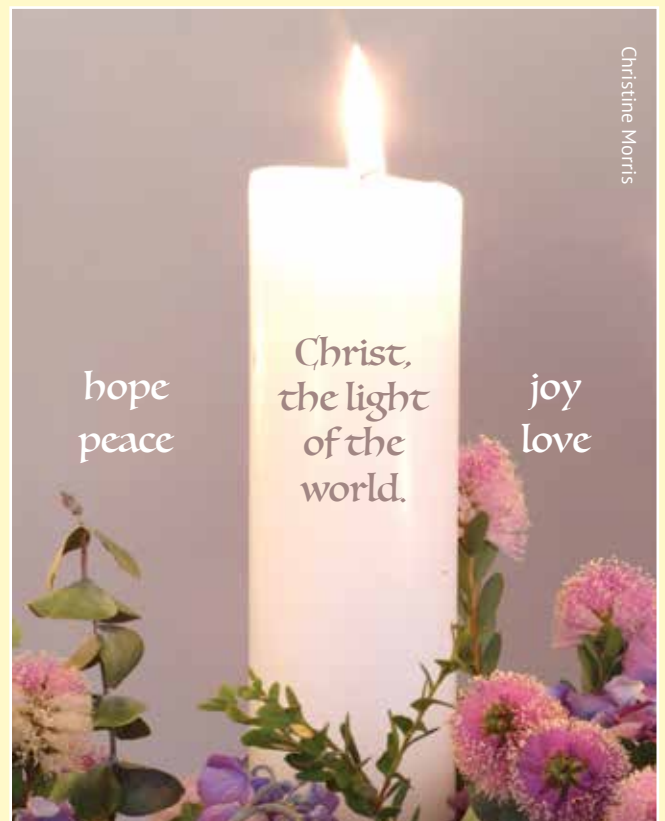
### DECEMBER

- 4 7pm–8:30pm Trafalgar Community Carols
- 5 7.30pm Induction of The Rev'd Colin Oakley at St Nicholas, Lakes Entrance
- 6 7pm Thorpdale Community Carols at Traveller's Rest
- 8 6.30pm Stratford Ecumenical Community Carols
- 14 4:30–8:30pm Any troubadours happy to come on board with Trafalgar's Travelling Carolers please contact Dean 0421216825
- 22 11am Thorpdale Nine Carols and Lessons
- 29 11 am St David's Uniting Church, Yarragon: first Sunday Sunday after Christmas: Remembering St Thomas Becket, William Temple and all 'meddlesome, troublesome and turbulent' priests. With a reading from *Murder in the Cathedral* by T S Eliot. Lunch afterwards (12:30 pm) at Fozigobble Café, 79 Princes Hwy, Yarragon

*For all inquiries about Trafalgar Parish events, contact Dean 0421 216 825*

### JANUARY

- 1 – 21 St Paul's Cathedral Giant Book Fair



Christine Morris



## A prayer for the children

God who so loved the world  
help us to love it too –  
every one and every thing  
for your sake. Amen.

### The <sup>Gippsland</sup> Anglican

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