



P3
Kate Campbell
retires from the
Registry Office



P8
The MOTO GP
on Phillip
Island



P17
175 years
of ABM

RRP \$7.95

The Gippsland Anglican

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Rejoice
in
the Lord

Psalm 33:1



God's great adventure in our flesh



The words 'advent' and 'adventure' share a common root. They both derive from the Latin *advenire*, meaning 'to come'. In the case of 'advent', from the further Latin derivation *adventus*, this has the sense of 'approach' or 'arrival'. 'Adventure' stems from the future participle of *advenire* – *adventurus* – with the sense of 'about to happen'.

Interestingly, in Middle English (via Old French), 'adventure' came to take on connotations of risk and chance, foreshadowing more modern usage around a new or exciting happening.

As we mark the Church's great season of Advent, imagining those additional letters 'u-r-e' can be helpful. Whilst the Incarnation is utterly consistent with patterns of divine interaction with creation and God's people as recounted 'in many and varied ways' (as the Ordinal puts it) in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, the Word-become-flesh is clearly something new and exciting in what theologians might call 'salvation history'.

And whilst we might not think of the Incarnation as a 'chance' happening (as in 'by chance'), by entering history in a particular time and place, subject to the forces of culture and politics and – yes – religion too, God-in-Christ takes a chance.

This is nicely versified in the Brian Wren hymn 'When pain and terror strike by chance' (*Together in Song* 262), which includes the lines: 'We marvel at God's nakedness and sense the play of chance in Herod's anger, Peter's growth, and Pilate's troubled glance.'

Albert Einstein famously quipped 'God doesn't play dice.' And yet creation and redemption are inherently risky activities. God's making room for something that is not God to exist – to exist and to become in genuine freedom – is risky, as any parent will attest.

The vulnerability involved in any act of redemption understood through the gospel lens of reconciliation is also risky, as anyone who has reached out to try and repair a broken relationship will have experienced.

From Mary's astonished (and astonishing) 'yes', to Judas' misreading of Jesus mission, to the genuine surrender of his spirit to the One he called Father even in that moment of abandonment, the sojourn of this Prodigal Son in the far country of our flesh to spend everything for our sake could well be described as an adventure. Would the Father run to meet him at the gate of death?

My dear late brother Peter was engaged in a writing project when his earthly journey prematurely ended in August. Its working title was 'Divine Maybe?' – an oblique reference to a line one of his own hymns 'Kingdom in me' (see Luke 17:20-21). Set to the tune *Kingsfold* (which is often used to accompany 'I heard the voice of Jesus say', as in *TiS* 585), the second and third verses read thus:

We glimpse God's power in nature's forms,
his love in our good friends;
we sense his being infinite
in space that never ends.
In all creations beautiful
lie shadows of his art,
but only in the depths of mine
can I discern God's heart.

I may not be religious
and my halo's rusted through.
When chaplains pray I cannot say
the words they ask me to.
Yet maybe deep within my soul
there lies a mystery:
that God is found on sacred ground
that hides inside of me.

A school chaplain in Anglican schools for more than 25 years of his priestly ministry, Pete took seriously the 'protest atheism' or 'post-institutional agnosticism' of many of his students. If an inkling of God's existence and presence for good – the 'divine maybe' – is to be known anywhere, he reflected, surely it is in the mystery of the incarnation: 'that God is found on sacred ground that hides inside of me'.

And if there is any substance to such a staggering claim, then its truth avails not only to me but to all whose flesh is ennobled by God's adventure therein.

What could be riskier than this 'divine maybe'? What could be more costly? And what could ever be more transformative for us and our world than the invitation to lifelong conversion of heart from within?

To return to Brian Wren's hymn (also set to *Kingsfold*, as it happens):

How deep the wisdom of our God,
how weak but truly wise,
to risk, to sacrifice and die,
and from the grave arise;
to shred the shroud of death and fate,
freeing our hearts for good;
we breathe the ample air of hope
and take our chance with God.

May our observance of Advent and celebration of Christmas be a time to rekindle our awareness of God's adventure in our flesh – yours and mine.

And, emboldened by the 'divine maybe', as we step into a new year of grace – Committed in Christ, Connecting in Service, Creative in Spirit – may we take similarly godly risks, with hearts freed for good and lungs filled with the ample air of hope, for the sake of the world God so loves.

+RM



A day of commitment and renewal at Rosedale

■ Lyndon Phillips

Beautiful weather welcomed the Parish of Rosedale together on 19 October as Bishop Richard commissioned and licensed two Lay Readers. This wonderful day coincided with the baptism of Trevor into the family of God.

Parishioners, family and friends from all three congregations came together to support and encourage Lay Readers Julie Smith and Sharon Reid in their new roles, as well as enfolding Trevor

into the faith community of Rosedale Parish. St Mark's was filled with joy and laughter as we celebrated this stage of three amazing and unique journeys that openly shared God's involvement in lives vastly different from each other.

Both Sharon and Julie are very active in our local community, sharing God's love through walking alongside and offering encouraging support to many.

L-R: Bishop Richard, Julie, Trevor, Sharon and Rev'd Phillips

Trevor's offering of a friendship bracelet sits proudly on the Holy Table – his gift to God.

Party time followed our service, with an abundance of food, fellowship and laughter. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this amazing day.

The Rev'd Lyndon Phillips is the Priest-in-Charge of Rosedale.

Kate Campbell retires from the Registry Office

■ Brian Norris

Kate Campbell joined the Registry Team in March 2020 and sadly will retire at the end of 2025 after almost six years of service. It was not her first time working in the Registry, as she worked for some months in that office in 2003 at a time when a new team was coming on board, including Annette Hollonds as Finance Officer and Brian Norris as Registrar. She left the Registry Team in late 2004 to pursue other opportunities, returning at the beginning of 2020.

For most of her time at the Registry, she shared an office with Annette Hollonds, and together they made a great team, keeping the financial and administrative machine ticking over. Their particular contribution, however, was the pastoral approach they took to the work at hand, going out of their way to support the clergy, parishes, and the people of the Diocese in a caring and timely manner. After Annette's departure in March 2024, Kate maintained this level of care and concern, often spending her personal time on pastoral support to members of the Diocese. This was Kate's particular strength.



This year, she and Joseph Gormally have worked closely together, and Kate has been instrumental in helping the new Registry team take up its ministry.

Kate's knowledge of the corporate and administrative history and processes of the Diocese is formidable, which, together with her attention to detail and persistence in following matters through, has greatly supported our shared mission.

Bishop Richard paid tribute to Kate:

A deacon through and through, Kate brings her diaconal heart to all that she does at the Registry Office and beyond. She leaves the office having helped to build a culture of servant leadership, and her commitment and dedication are exemplary.

Her contribution to the life of the Diocese is extended through her ministry at the Cathedral as a deacon, and as a police chaplain at Sale, where she recently received a regional award for her work there. Kate was highly involved in Anam Cara and also has a ministry at The Abbey, where she has conducted retreats and quiet days. She plans to continue these activities after retiring from the Registry Office.

Kate will be much missed at the Registry Office, and we are blessed with the knowledge that she will continue to be part of our diocesan household.

The Rev'd Brian Norris is a former Registrar of Gippsland and currently Deputy Registrar and Parish Priest at Tambo.

Three new Deacons for the Diocese and the Church of God on the Feast of St Luke

■ Bishop Richard Treloar

As reported on the back page of November's *TGA*, Gippsland Anglicans have been greatly encouraged by the ordination of three deacons at St Paul's Cathedral, Sale, on 18 October.

Retreat Conductor and preacher at the ordination service, The Rev'd Gradwell Fredericks – an Examining Chaplain for the Diocese – acknowledged the families of the candidates early on in his reflections, an excerpt of which follows:

I would like to remind us of one of the key elements in the vocational discernment process, and that is family. You have allowed and released your spouse, father, mother, and grandfather to serve in God's church. Your 'yes' has made their response to God's call possible. Thank you!

St. Paul writes:

In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us.
(2 Cor 5:19)

This work of reconciliation has come about through God's love for the world, a world into which God breaks not in power but in humility, not in strength but in vulnerability – in fact, in the cry of a small baby.

Reconciliation can only take place between equals, which is why Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.' (Phil 2:5)

Do you see then how vital your ministry and witness are for the Church today? We are faced with a broken

world; brokenness revealed in abuse of power, corruption, unemployment, drug addiction, poverty and hunger, violence against women and children. The list can go on, but if we are to speak God's word of reconciliation we cannot do so from a lofty height or the security of power.

This is why you as a Deacon will wear your stole crossed over, like a waiter, like one who serves. In his book *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen, who is addressing all those called to ministry, says that the way of healing is by the minister embracing his/her vulnerability and making space for the one who comes to us in their woundedness.

The parishes where you will serve are not a surgery waiting for a doctor; they are communities of faith who will enable you to become a more whole person provided you come as one who serves.

But not only those who are ordained: all of us by virtue of our baptism are ministers, servants in God's Kingdom, exercising a variety of gifts.

In her words of affirmation towards the end of the service, The Rev'd Kate Campbell – Deacon of the Eucharist and an Examining Chaplain for the Diocese – reflected on some of the gifts represented among these three ordinands:

Ken

What an encouragement and gift that you share your faith journey with your wife Anne, having done so wherever you have lived and worshipped.

L-R: Ken Spackman, Josh Hasan and Sarah Gover celebrated at their ordination as Deacons on St Luke's day, Saturday 18 October

After a career in the banking industry, you committed yourself to lay ministry as Registrar of the Melbourne Diocese and grew a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Anglican governance and polity. You played a significant role in strengthening Safe Church practices, something that has flowed through to other dioceses, not least our own.

Your move to Mallacoota was meant to be into semi-retirement, a slower pace. Perhaps we could have a conversation around that word 'retirement', Ken, because I have taken it out of my vocabulary!

You began working with the community bank in Mallacoota, albeit briefly, eventually handing the baton for customer service on to Anne.

The outcome of that exchange was the ministry that has grown through your hardware store in Mallacoota. The store has provided an opportunity for outreach that you seem to have grasped with both hands – the incidental day-to-day conversations, having a listening ear to discern when someone may need a confidential and caring chat, particularly for men.

Having been a Lay Reader, you have offered an important ministry through both liturgical and pastoral leadership in the Croajingolong Parish and wider community. Your commitment to completing your theological studies through Charles Sturt University will help you discern what form your final calling in Holy Orders might be. What a joy it must be to wear one of Roger Jackman's stoles today.

A Deacon with a heart for pastoral care with people on the fringes.

Sarah

My earliest memory of Sarah is standing here at this lectern, encouraging our community of faith at St Paul's when you were Anglicare Victoria's Community Development Officer for Parish Partnerships. That was a few years ago now, and since returning from a sojourn in Queensland, with your husband Dave alongside you, you have been committed to the Parish of Traralgon.

As a Lay Reader and stipendiary lay worker for the parish, you have continued your deep passion for community engagement, holding a strong pastoral interest in working with Op Shops to help them discern ways of supporting volunteers so their public face is focused on outreach and community building.

The Ministry Development Program has challenged you, and through it you have grown in different ways and achieved a great deal.

With a heart for Rwanda, you value the role of Diocesan Commissary for the Covenant of Companionship in Gahini – a covenant signed by Bishop Jeffrey Driver more than 20 years ago, and your stole today is a precious gift from that Diocese.

A Deacon with a heart for the community.

Josh

I remember meeting Josh several years ago in Discernment Group, when we both had lots of questions. In particular, you were asking where God might be calling you and were seeking an understanding about how and why we do things as Anglicans.

It is valuable that your faith is a path you share with your wife Jen and children, currently in the parish of Warragul where you worship together, and Neerim South, where you have been undertaking a placement as a Lay Reader.

Your passion for youth is aided by your diverse denominational experiences. The value you place on physical well-being and love of sport can be a great conversation starter and an opportunity to share your faith in the wider community, most especially with young people.

The role you have at Neerim South Secondary College as part of the wellbeing team cannot be undervalued – it doesn't need to be about the title we are given, nor what we say, but most importantly how we act and live out our faith.

You have completed some theology study, and sensing you'd like to do more, I am sure you will know the right time to undertake that.

The stole you wear today is a beautiful gift from Jen's mum, Hilary.

A Deacon with a heart for Jesus and young people.

At the conclusion of the service The Rev'd Canon Amy Turner presented stoles to the new deacons on behalf of ABM in its 175th year, and diocesan Mothers' Union President, Mrs Lindy Driver presented Prayer Books to those ordained.

Inspired by the response of Josh, Sarah, and Ken to their diaconal vocation, may we likewise take up our baptismal calling, in the words of prayer used by Fr Gradwell each day of the ordination retreat:

Ever present Lord, we turn to you.
We see the plentiful harvest in need of tending. We hear your gentle voice calling us to care. Let us step forward to embody your presence and trust your mighty power to lead and to guide.
Lord, we hear you calling.
We are ready to serve!
Amen.

Preparing for ordination

Reflections from the pre-ordination retreat

■ Sarah Gover, Josh Hasan and Ken Spackman

A few days before our ordination, we gathered at the Abbey for a retreat led by Rev'd Gradwell Fredericks. The theme of this retreat was *My Call, My Jesus, My Journey*.

The retreat began with two thought-provoking questions posed by Gradwell: 'When were you called?' and 'What gifts do you bring to the Church?' Rooted in the story of the calling of the first disciples from Matthew 4:18–22, these questions set the tone for deep reflection.

Gradwell challenged us to consider how we were thinking about ourselves, and how others saw us, compared with how God saw us. We pondered how we would use our gifts in the calling of a deacon. We realized that God has prepared us for this calling and that with Him, with the Holy Spirit, we are enough. He has given us what we will need and even more.

Drawing inspiration from the writings of Henri Nouwen, Gradwell challenged us to ponder on Nouwen's thoughts including, 'you are worth more than the results of your efforts' and 'your worth in not the

same as your usefulness.' We were also challenged to consider the importance of creating a lonely and quiet place – an important skill in this busy life. We spent time putting into practice the important skill of inner peace amid the noise and activity of life and ministry, as we had the privilege of sharing the special space that is The Abbey with Gippsland Grammar's Year Fours on their annual camp.

Throughout the retreat, Gradwell emphasised that ministry is something to be celebrated, not congratulated for. Becoming a deacon is a privilege, and it calls for a willingness to forget oneself, or even to be forgotten, for the sake of Jesus. We also spent time understanding the liturgical privileges and responsibilities of a deacon.

The Abbey provided a peaceful setting for prayer and pondering. Gradwell's gentle guidance encouraged us to see the tapestry God was weaving through our lives. The retreat was not just about preparation, but also about affirmation. We all gained renewed confidence in our calling.



L–R: Josh Hasan, Sarah Gover, Ken Spackman and Rev'd Fredericks

We were ordained at the Cathedral on 18 October, surrounded by family, friends, and the wider church community, and Gradwell again challenged us in his sermon.

For all of us, the journey to ordination had been marked by moments of wrestling with God, and the retreat was a time to stop and fully accept our calling – a process that is sometimes challenging. The retreat provided the space and support needed, not only to be ready for our ordination but also for the journey that is ahead of us.

The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.

Mahatma Gandhi



Ben White on Unsplash

Gossip

■ Graeme Liersch

Gossip – just hearing the word raises negative pictures in my mind, and no doubt it does the same to many others.

Gossip in today's world is not good; we use it to undermine and pull down people. It is destructive, yet we all do it, sometimes without realising.

HOPE25

But not all gossip has to be negative; it can, in fact, be positive – something we call positive gossip.

Want to hear some positive gossip?
Well, have I got a good one for you.

I know of this roughly 15-year-old girl who became pregnant in an unusual way. They say the Holy Spirit came upon her and, after nine months, she had a baby boy. Apparently, her boyfriend, who was planning to marry her, decided that he would bug out and not go through with it. But, for some strange reason, he changed his mind and married her anyway.

Rumour has it that they named the baby boy Jesus and that he is the Son of God. Come on, seriously – how can that be?

Why would God do something like that?

They say God loves us and wants a personal relationship with us.

Now that is interesting!

Have you heard anything about this?

Do you have some up-to-date gossip on it?

What I've heard lately is that this baby has had a huge impact on many people's lives. I've even heard people want to follow him because they feel so safe and secure when with him.

Have you heard anything about these people? Or are you one of them?

Anon!

The Rev'd Graeme Liersch is a member of the Diocesan Hope25 Facilitation Team.

Foster invites the community to Taste and See

■ Fran Grimes

From July to October this year, Christ Church Foster extended invitations to the community to come and 'taste and see' that the Lord is good.

We chose to run this program on first Sundays in the months of July to October and began each evening with a meal relating to the message.

The first month carried the theme that God created this world and it was good. We enjoyed a healthy organic fresh meal, then followed with a presentation on the goodness of God's creation. The second month we explored what has gone wrong and how sin entered the world – the meal was fast food, in particular pizzas. The presentation focused on all that is wrong with the world. For the third month, a Middle Eastern feast of roast lamb, hummus and flatbread led into the good news that Jesus, as the Lamb of God, has taken away the sins of the world. Then finally, the fourth month had a great meal reminding us of the final banquet when we join in the great wedding feast of Jesus the Lamb and his Church.



This program was advertised on the Hope 25 website and can be accessed through the 'Taste and See' website at <https://tasteandsee.org.au/>. The cost is \$100 for fully downloadable resources, including PowerPoint presentations and messages.

It probably works better as four weekly meals with an effort to specifically invite non-Christian friends. However, we found

it was a good, clear gospel presentation which was able to train participants in their sharing of the gospel in a simple way. It also acted as a basis for our newly started evening services. It is a great way to share a meal with a message.

The Rev'd Dr Canon Fran Grimes is the Rector of Corner Inlet.



L-R: Jayda Edebohls, Kay Hendriks and Della Maverick

Op Shop fashion show celebrates community, creativity, and compassion

■ Sarah Gover

In early October, the local St James Anglican community came together for an awesome community event: an 'Op Shop Fashion Show'. An impressive crowd of 140 guests came to enjoy the evening, celebrating fashion through the ages, community and connections.

We discovered that our Op Shop Manager, Jayda, has a genuine talent for fashion design. With meticulous research into each decade, she created authentic outfits from items donated to the shop, ensuring every outfit told a story and honoured its era.

The event's knowledgeable MC kept the audience entertained, sharing fascinating insights and anecdotes about the history of fashion, the area, and the unique pieces on display. His commentary entertained and brought the audience along a journey as the models displayed fashion.

This was enhanced by one of our op shop volunteers, who turned out to be a skilled IT and music buff. He crafted a soundtrack that perfectly matched each outfit, enhancing the atmosphere and transporting guests through time as

models showcased styles from different decades. The music was a highlight.

Although it was just a fashion show, it was also a statement of community – with people's talents shining through. From the amazing food prepared and served by volunteers, to the huge team who worked tirelessly behind the scenes, every detail reflected the generosity and creativity of those involved.

Importantly, the event raised funds for Anglicare's Trak Forward Program, supporting people in the area who have experienced domestic violence. The money raised will help provide vital services and support, making a real difference to the lives of those in need.

The fashion show was more than just a fundraiser – it was a celebration of the wider Anglican community. Members from the church, op shop, St Paul's Anglican Grammar School, and retirement village all played a part. A talented Year 11 student from the school entertained guests during intermission with classic 60s and 70s music, while residents from the local Anglican retirement village enjoyed a wonderful night out.

This project showcased the best of what a community can achieve when it comes together: honouring history, supporting those in need, and celebrating the unique gifts of every individual. The op shop fashion show was not only a dazzling display of style, but also a powerful reminder of the impact of kindness, collaboration and shared purpose.

The Rev'd Sarah Gover has been serving at Traralgon as Lay Worker and most recently Parish Deacon.



Giving a gift that lasts

Bequests to Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

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.

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Always consult a solicitor when preparing or amending your will.



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Lily Sykes modelling past fashion with style and grace



The MOTO GP on Phillip Island

Ruth on a Triumph, one of the CMA's bikes

■ Ruth Hanlon

There was a great buzz on the Island over the MotoGP weekend in October. The parish again enjoyed serving up full breakfasts to many bikers from Friday to Monday. We welcomed back many who had been joining us for many years. It is wonderful to build up these relationships. We also welcomed new people for the first time.

A few who come in on their own join others at tables and value the friendship and fellowship. I know of one who offered to share accommodation with one biker who was sleeping rough. The friendliness of the church and community volunteers is often commented on.

We also had several bikers come along from the Christian Motorcycle Association, and their Gospels of Mark, 'Riding with Purpose', were available and handed out to some.

We were thrilled to show off our newly renovated parish hall with freshly painted walls and polished floorboards, thanks largely to a wonderful grant from the Bendigo Bank and generous donations from parishioners.

There have been some rumblings about moving the MotoGP to another state, but we hope it will remain on Phillip Island for many years to come.

There is always a great atmosphere as church and community volunteers come together to serve over those four mornings. Honorary Parish Deacon, Rev'd Erena Norfolk Erena Norfolk headed up a wonderful team, and the quality of the breakfasts is always appreciated. One couple said it was the best cooked breakfast they had had in a long time. For me, it's the porridge that is superb!

We pray that our positive engagement and prayer for those who come will stir some to seek church fellowship as they return to their homes, and we look forward to welcoming them back next year.

The Rev'd Ruth Hanlon is the Rector of Bass / Phillip Island.



Laughter, conversation and generous hospitality filled the parish hall over MotoGP weekend

Avon Parish Family Fun Fair 2025

■ Gail Wager

Our prayers were answered! The skies were blue and the sun was shining on the morning of Saturday 4 October, for the Family Fun Fair – and best of all, no wind! Preparations completed, the Parish was ready to welcome local families at 10am with the enticing smell of sausages and onions cooking on the BBQ.

The Parish, as always, is grateful to sponsors Wellington Shire Council for their grant, thus enabling this community event to take place; Marathon Electrical for the electrical work ensuring all was safe; and Stratford Scouts (on the barbecue) for their support.

We were fortunate to have local

Wellington Shire Councillor Edward Lowe open the proceedings for us.

Many families enjoyed the day of free children's activities, barbecue lunch, raffles, giveaways, and a variety of stalls, including the cake and plant stalls. Jumping castles, a trackless train, a ukulele group, Animals on the Move, face painting, and the presence of local CFA and SES volunteers all contributed to what was a wonderful day of community enjoyment and outreach in the current cost-of-living crisis affecting families. After lunch, a sausage-eating competition was held.

The morning Pet Show was well supported by judge, local vet Dr Steve

Postlethwaite, who faced some challenging decisions! Pets included creatures great and small. Each entrant received a personalised certificate with an appropriate pet prize, courtesy of two local vet practices.

A rewarding and busy day for all involved!

Coincidentally, the next day was the annual Blessing of the Pets service, in honour of St Francis of Assisi, at Stratford's Holy Trinity Church, with vet Dr Steve as the guest speaker.

Gail Wager is a Liturgical Assistant at Avon.

Mission possible: Children's rights in action at Warragul

■ Carol Monson

On an afternoon in late October, the Warragul Anglican Church was alive with the movement and excited voices of children aged between 6 and 12 years old.

Every year, the Victorian Department of Education invites organisations to apply for a grant of up to \$1,000 to contribute to the cost of hosting a free Children's Week activity designed to provide families with the opportunity of connecting with each other.

The national theme in 2025 was 'Everyone should know about Children's Rights,' based on Article 42 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The event was a national celebration of children's rights, focusing on the importance of their safety, well-being, and rights.

Warragul Anglican Church, led by Children's Ministry Leader Stacey Kearney, applied for a grant to run a Nerf Mission for children aged 6–12 years old to help them understand they have rights through play in an area of interest to them, that they can expect safe adults to support their play, and ensure the activities they engage in are safe.

Nerf Missions was an afternoon of various games involving soft Nerf bullets. Children worked in teams to complete various missions, some of which required strategy and planning, while others involved more individual skills. The children completed four missions: Mission Decode and Decipher, Mission Defend, Mission Rescue, and Mission Personal Achievement. 37 children were booked in for the event held in October. The afternoon was lots of fun for the kids (and leaders). The youth then used the setup for their usual Friday evening program.

Stacey was assisted by a number of church members who

seemed to be having as much fun as the children. This event was also designed to attract more children to the WAC after-school program, WACKY, which is held fortnightly for Grade 3–6 students.

Carol Monson is the TGA representative at Warragul.



Coralie Esbert and Deepthy Blanchard, two members involved in *mainly music* and SALT Club



The healing ministry in the church of Melanesia

The SOMA team

■ Susan and Graeme Liersch

You may have a headache, a fever, or an injury of some sort, so what do you do?

For Susan and me, we take Panadol, or if our health condition is worse, we make an appointment to see a doctor. If in a worse condition, we go straight to Emergency at the local hospital, or we ring 000.

But what do you do when you live in a highland village a day's walk from the coast and many more days' walk from the nearest hospital or pharmacy?

Well, if you live on one of the many islands of the Solomon Islands, you either go and see the witch doctor or the parish priest.

With the witch doctor, he may conjure up a substance from native plants, such as Cava, that will comatose you, or he may even use black magic, which goes against everything you have been taught about faith in God.

On the other hand, by going to the priest of your local village church, he will pray for you, anoint you with oil, and counsel you. Actions such as these are a real test of faith in God for the unwell person.

The people of the Solomon Islands are very religious, in the sense that they are very Anglo-Catholic, and worship God weekly. For example, the Sunday I preached at All Saints' Anglican Church, Honiara, the church was packed from wall to wall, with the verandas full as well. As such, the people's instinct is to go to the parish priest for help.

The big risk for the clergy is that, in their wisdom and living a life in a village, they may inadvertently pick up practices that meld superstition with the Word of God.

All the clergy are familiar with Christ's healing through the power of the Holy

Spirit, and that Jesus' disciples were able to do the same, but in their culture, there are great challenges posed by traditional village medicine as espoused by the village witch doctor or other people who have experienced healing. How do they deal with it in the context of their faith and their environment?

Unfortunately, some clergy had developed practices that were somewhat dubious and were of great concern to their Bishop and the Archbishop of Melanesia.

It is into this situation that a team of seven from SOMA Australia, led by the Rev'd Brett Waterson, were invited by the Archbishop of Melanesia, The Most Reverend Leonard Dawea, to do some teaching on 'Being prepared' and 'Staying the course,' 'Healing' and 'Deliverance,' 'Forgiveness' and 'Discipleship.'

Over 10 day period, from 1–10 October, the team taught on these subjects and then put them into practice at the Clergy conference for the Diocese of Guadalcanal and the Diocese of Central Melanesia.

Fifty clergy took part in the teaching, and it was Rev'd Susan's and my pleasure to present the teaching on 'Healing,' based around six scriptural foundations, followed by another session on the practice of healing.

The six scriptural foundations we shared were:

1. The unchanging God who heals;
2. The Son who heals;
3. Healing is the ongoing work of Christ through His body – the Church;
4. The atonement work of the cross was not just about salvation and triumph over evil; it was also about healing;
5. The in-breaking of the Kingdom of God; and
6. Perseverance.

Each of these foundations is fairly self-explanatory, but in brief, they reveal God's healing in the Old Testament, Jesus' healing in the New Testament, healing continuing through the church after Christ's ascension, that Christ's death and resurrection put illness to death, that all is part of the Kingdom of God breaking into our world, and finally, we are to persevere and not give up.

Central to the session was the understanding that the Holy Spirit heals and that there is no magical way of doing it or secret formulae. As the centurion said to Jesus, 'but just say the word and my servant will be healed' (Matthew 8:8 NIV).

As with the Church in Australia, the Anglican Church of Melanesia is continuing to put 'Safe Ministry' protocols in place. To aid this, on the following day we shared 'Protocols and practices of the healing ministry,' which included seeking permission to place your hand on a person's shoulder or head and making it clear there is no need to touch a person's injury or painful area, such as their stomach. Again, the reminder was that the Holy Spirit heals and that Jesus merely needs to say the word and the person will be healed.

Overall, the Bishop, Archdeacon, and Dean of the Cathedral were all encouraged by the teaching and felt it helped to address the issues they were experiencing. At the final meeting with the Executive, they expressed a desire that SOMA return in the near future to present similar teaching with women in the Church of Melanesia.

As a prelude to this, Susan, Melinda, and Michelle had the opportunity to visit a women's refuge run by the 'Sisters of Melanesia.' The refuge is the only space in the Solomon Islands that offers women escaping domestic violence refuge for up to three weeks. The refuge is on the outskirts of Honiara, and to access it we travelled first by car for some 20 minutes, then walked along a stretch of beach for another 10 or so minutes. On our first visit, we met with and prayed for the women currently in residence. They received our prayers with gratitude. On our second visit, we conducted a communion service in which Susan shared about the wholistic healing that the woman with the issue of blood received from Jesus: instant physical healing as well as healing from shame, social and spiritual isolation, culminating in emotional and mental peace – a message these hurting women needed to hear.

We praise God for enabling us to minister in this way.

If you're interested in being part of a SOMA team or learning more about the ministry of the Holy Spirit, then please



Rev'd's Graeme and Susan teaching on spiritual healing

contact SOMA through their website: <https://somaau.org.au> or by contacting Rev'd Graeme or Rev'd Susan Liersch.

A more comprehensive report of the mission can be found on their website as well.

The Rev'd Graeme Liersch is the Rector of Wonthaggi/Inverloch and Rev'd Susan Liersch is the Deacon (Youth and Families Minister) at Wonthaggi/Inverloch.

Building hope that lasts – the heart of Christmas

■ Wendy Mawoyo

As we come to the close of another year, I find myself reflecting on the incredible work being done across Gippsland through our Parish Partnerships, with gratitude.

In my role with Anglicare Victoria as the Community Development Coordinator, I have the privilege of walking alongside parishes in the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland. A big shout-out to the Parish Partnership Committee – who supported me throughout the year. Our challenges are nothing compared to the hope that we bring to communities – together, we've seen how faith in action can transform lives and bring lasting hope to our communities.

This October grant round, we've supported a range of parish-led projects that are making a real difference:

- **Maffra** – providing community meals that nourish both body and Spirit.
- **Bairnsdale** – offering emotional and pastoral support to people navigating the court system, helping rebuild confidence and connection.
- **Mirboo North** – restoring community life through the beauty and fellowship of a shared garden.
- **Drouin** – deepening reconciliation and understanding with our First Nations brothers and sisters.

- **Wonthaggi** – continuing to respond to those in need through emergency relief and care.

- **Corner Inlet** – creating a welcoming space for families to gather, bond, and build stronger relationships.

Each of these projects is a beacon of hope – a reminder that when we come together, we can make a difference that lasts well beyond the moment.

Partnering with each other

As we approach Christmas, the season of hope and renewal, I am reminded that hope is not a distant dream – it's something we create through love, action, and unity. The work we do together through Anglicare and our parishes shows that no act of kindness is ever too small.

I also want to celebrate us – Anglicare Victoria and the Anglican Diocese of Gippsland – for the way we've continued to support one another in faith and service. Anglicare Victoria's dedication to provide hope through services for parents, youth, Indigenous communities, children, and families – connecting their services to parishes – has built hope and resilience in communities.

A special thanks to the parishes of Bunyip and Traralgon for your steadfast support through your op shops. I recently

attended the best op shop fashion show at Traralgon to support Anglicare Vic's family violence program, Trak Forward. Your generosity helps sustain our shared mission and extends our reach to those who need it most.

Looking ahead, there's even more to be hopeful about.

We're thrilled to have secured funding to deliver Emergency Relief in Gippsland. This is an exciting new chapter, and as we lay the foundations, we ask for your prayers and ongoing involvement. Parishes already do such vital work in this space, and your continued partnership will ensure that no one faces hardship alone.

Thank you all for the love, commitment, and hope you bring to your communities. My heart is full. This Christmas, may you be filled with peace, joy, and the deep assurance that what we do together truly matters.

Have a blessed Christmas and a hopeful 2026 from me and on behalf of Anglicare Victoria. Yours in gratitude and hope,

Wendy Mawoyo

Wendy Mawoyo is the Community Development Coordinator (Parish Partnerships) for Anglicare Victoria – Gippsland. Mobile: 0429 171 44. Email: wendy.mawoyo@anglicarevic.org.au

Future initiatives

A parish response to domestic and family violence

■ Sarah Gover

The Anglican Church of Australia recently held its national conference, 'A Faithful Church Response to Domestic and Family Violence,' in Melbourne. This year's focus was on empowering parishes to respond to gender-based violence in meaningful ways.

This month, parishes are invited to participate in UN Women's '16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence.' This campaign presents an opportunity to engage with the Anglican Church's Ten Commitments to end gender-based violence in our churches and communities. For example, last year St Paul's and the Mothers Union in Warragul hosted a 16 Days of Activism evening, featuring community speakers, survivor testimonies, and a display that created a safe space for people to ask questions and connect with others who are committed to addressing this serious issue.

The Parish of Yarram also engaged with the 16 days of activism last year. They partnered with the local hospital, Gippsland Women's Health, the local Neighbourhood House, the local secondary school, Red Cross and other local churches to provide 16 days of activities. They consulted widely with communities to see what the community needed before planning events, then planned a varied programme that engaged many members of their community. The 16 activities included a men's breakfast, a women's breakfast, and a full day program that involved children at the local school, church services of lament and a smoking ceremony from our local Indigenous men. A highlight was a candlelight vigil with 120 members of the community joining in.

Below are several ways other your parish could get involved in raising awareness of gender-based violence:

- Reflect on healthy relationships with Common Grace's 16-day online program register at www.commongrace.org.au/healthy_relationships.



- Invite a speaker from Anglicare's Trak Forward programme or another community initiative addressing gender-based violence.
 - Collect items for a local women's refuge or Anglicare program.
 - Display banners or posters from the Mothers' Union (download from <https://www.muaustralia.org.au/resources-for-16-days-of-activism>).
 - Watch Anglicare's 'Before It Starts' video (https://youtu.be/NBs_qqqo0K8), especially with young people.
 - Share the Ten Commitments resource (available at <https://www.tencommitments.org.au/ten-commitments-overview>).
 - Create a prayer wall for anonymous prayers and messages of hope.
 - Host a coffee morning or high tea to discuss violence prevention.
- If you or your parish already have an awareness of gender-based violence issues, you may wish to take a deeper dive into engaging with the Ten Commitments for the prevention of, and response to, domestic and family violence. These commitments are a tool for the Anglican Church of Australia to help resource and empower us as a Diocese and in our parishes, to bring about change and to continuously improve our preventative work. There are many ways to engage with the commitments:
- St David's Anglican Cathedral, Hobart (Diocese of Tasmania) has conducted training for clergy and pastoral carers on responding to domestic violence, aligned with *Commitment 3: Support – Provide pastoral care and practical support to those affected*. This strengthened the church's capacity to offer trauma-informed care and referrals.
 - The parishes of Mirboo North and Traralgon have spent time presenting the words of holy scripture in ways that actively guard against misunderstanding and distortions that justify domestic and family violence, and that underscore the equality of all human beings in the image of God. This aligns with *Commitment 7: Challenge attitudes and practices that enable violence*.
 - St Paul's Anglican Church, Bendigo (Diocese of Bendigo) partnered with local domestic violence services to host a community forum on respectful relationships and prevention strategies. This fostered collaboration between faith and secular sectors, fulfilling *Commitment 8: Partner – Collaborate with local services and networks*.
 - The Mothers Union is a key contributor to this commitment, encouraging parishes to work together and with other agencies, especially through projects like the installation of Red Benches at public locations in Paynesville and Bairnsdale, and the

provision of information in churches about responding to disclosures of gender-based violence and referring to local support services.

- Last year, St Peter's Anglican Church, Eastern Hill (Diocese of Melbourne) created a prayer wall during the 16 Days campaign and distributed daily reflections via email and social media. This helped parishioners engage with *Commitment 10: (Pray) and raise awareness.*
- Another option to consider is enrolling in a 'Communities that Care' course. This programme acknowledges that we are bystanders to each other's lives and to the life of our church community as a whole. We see, we hear, we notice. When something doesn't seem right, we have the opportunity to choose a response that brings care and safety.

The team behind the Ten Commitments have now put together this six-week online bystander training programme for parishes. You can find more information or register your interest at <https://www.tencommitments.org.au/training>.

If you have read all of this and are interested to know more, have additional ideas, or have already implemented some of these initiatives in your parish, you may be interested to share these with the diocesan working group being established to help resource and encourage parishes and individuals as we respond to gender-based violence in our parishes and communities. More information about this group will be shared as it emerges.

The Rev'd Sarah Gover has been serving at Traralgon as Lay Worker and most recently Parish Deacon.



Brenda, Deb, Libby and Julie watching on while Janet whipped up her delicious scones

■ Deb and Julie on behalf of Submerge

On Saturday 25 October, 'Submerge' held a very successful morning tea fundraiser at St Philips, Cowes, in aid of brain cancer research.

'Submerge' is a group of local women who swim every morning at Cowes beach. Some of the women are taking part in the 'Point to Pinnacle' half

marathon up Mt Wellington in Hobart in November. Why would anyone be inspired to walk or run up hill for 21.4Km? In our case it's to support Sarah, a beautiful young mum who dips with the 'Submerge' group when she can. Sarah lives with brain cancer and is four years into a two-to-five-year prognosis. However, cancer does not deter her from living her best life and doing her

utmost to further brain cancer research.

Sarah will have a team of about 50 fellow walkers this year heading up the mountain, including six 'Submergers'.

The morning tea was a huge success, with Janet's delicious scones selling out by 11am! This was followed by all the delicious, donated slices and cakes being sold out by 12!

Sarah attended and shared, from a very personal point of view, just how vital these fundraising efforts were in furthering research.

It was sobering to hear: brain cancer kills more children in Australia than any other disease, kills more under 40s than any other cancer, and 80% of those diagnosed will die within five years. I'm not sure if there was a dry eye in the room.

However, her words were also very inspiring. Sarah spoke of 'hope'. Hope for raising awareness, hope for new medical breakthroughs, as with other cancers, and hope for all those living with this currently incurable disease.

Sarah shared, 'I'm so grateful and humbled by the generosity of these beautiful 'Submerge' women and all those who have helped out today'.

Due to the generosity of the Anglican Church, the morning tea raised over \$2,500! We could not have done this without the donated space, the support of church members, and of course Janet's amazing scones!

All the funds from the morning tea go directly to:

Carrie's Beanies 4 Brain Cancer.

If you'd like to know more, please check out: www.carriesbeanies4braincancer.com/ and: <https://pointtopinnacle.com.au/>.

Gippsland Grammar's Japan study tour deepens 30+ year bond

Gippsland Grammar students recently enjoyed a 10-day study tour of Japan

During the recent school holidays, a group of Gippsland Grammar students embarked on an unforgettable 10-day study tour of Japan, continuing the school's long-standing sister-school relationship with Hikarigaoka Girls High School in Okazaki.

The tour combined cultural learning, language immersion, and international friendship. Students began their journey in Kyoto, where they visited the historic Kiyomizu Temple, enjoyed a traditional *Maiko* experience and explored sites dating back more than 1000 years. From there, they travelled to Osaka for a day at Universal Studios before visiting Hiroshima, where they reflected deeply on the history

of the atomic bombing and listened to the moving testimony of a survivor.

Japanese teacher Masami Sugisaki, who co-led the tour, said the visit to Hiroshima was an experience that would stay with students and staff for years to come.

'It was beyond our imagination to comprehend what happened 80 years ago right where we were standing.'

Beyond the history and sights, the most memorable part of the experience came when the 20 students had the opportunity to reconnect with familiar faces at the Hikarigaoka Girls High School.

'Gippsland Grammar has been making the trip to visit our sister school every two years since we established the relationship more than 30 years ago, which is very special,' Sugisaki Sensei said. 'It's allowed us to form longstanding relationships and when we visit, we feel safe and valued. We visited some amazing places in Japan, but I really think it was the chance to see familiar faces and truly immerse ourselves in the language that was the highlight, for both teachers and students.'

The final days of the tour were spent in Okazaki at Hikarigaoka, where the Gippsland students rejoined their friends for language lessons, games and cultural activities, including a performance by the school's renowned dance club.

Year 11 student Lloyd Turnbull said his personal trip highlight was the time spent at Hikarigaoka, where he gave a speech in fluent Japanese on stage in front of all the Hikarigaoka students.

'Though we only spent three days there, I loved almost every aspect about it,' Lloyd said. 'Everyone was just so nice and helpful and there was just a great atmosphere around the whole school and many of us made friends during our visit. I went to Japan not really knowing what to expect, and by the time I boarded the plane back home, I was wishing I could stay for another 10 days!'

The partnership between Gippsland Grammar and Hikarigaoka Girls High School began in 1992 under then Principal Campbell Bairstow and Japanese teachers Jan Chalmer and Helen Patton. Over the past 33 years, it has flourished into a cherished friendship that extends beyond the classroom, with many students maintaining contact – and even returning visits – with their host families long after their school years are finished. Several former Hikarigaoka students have since joined Gippsland Grammar as Language Assistants.

Gippsland Grammar's Head of Languages Arthur Chen said the opportunity for students to embrace cross-cultural learning through exchanges and study tours was invaluable.

The partnership with Hikarigaoka Girls High School continues to be a cornerstone of Gippsland Grammar's international program, with the next visit to Sale by Hikarigaoka students scheduled for 2026 and the next Japan Study Tour scheduled for 2027 for students then in Years 9–11.



Gippsland Grammar students Tiffany McEntee (front), Millie Gilmore, Chelsea Trewin, Olive Linley and Zara Missen enjoy a meal of authentic and freshly-made udon noodles



Celebrating the opening of Drouin's new Early Learning Centre

Unveiling the plaque: Darren Jennings (St Paul's Board Chair), Bishop Richard, Rowan van Raay (Head of St Paul's Drouin Junior School) and Cameron Herbert (St Paul's Principal)

St Paul's Anglican Grammar School marked a historic milestone on Friday 7 November with the official opening and dedication of its Early Learning Centre in Drouin.

The ceremony, held on the school's picturesque 36-acre campus, was led by St Paul's Principal, Mr Cameron Herbert, with Bishop Richard conducting the dedication.

The Drouin campus, which opened earlier this year, expands St Paul's to three campuses and includes a new kindergarten and primary school catering for students from pre-kinder (three-year-old kinder) to Year 3 in 2025 and will reach Year 6 by 2027.

Its elevated location on the Melbourne side of Drouin, just minutes from the M1 freeway, provides an inspiring setting for learning and play.

The Early Learning Centre was made possible through a \$2 million contribution from the Victorian School Building Authority, Department of Education. The purpose built facility features four bright, open classrooms and outdoor play spaces that blend seamlessly with the surrounding natural landscape, encouraging exploration, creativity and wellbeing.

With more than 20 years since a new school was last built in the area, the St Paul's Drouin Campus represents a significant and much-needed addition to the local community.

St Paul's students dig in for a greener future

Students at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School's Drouin Campus made the most of the beautiful spring weather recently, rolling up their sleeves for a tree-planting session on campus.

The activity gave students a hands-on opportunity to learn about caring for the environment as they dug holes, prepared soil, planted seedlings, and carefully placed guards around each young tree for protection.

By the end of the day, around 60 new trees had been planted, and students are already looking forward to watching their efforts grow and flourish in the months and years ahead. By digging in for a greener future, students also enjoyed the health and happiness that come from working together and connecting with nature.



Blaire Davey watering a new plant

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From the Abbey – December 2025

■ Cath Connelly

Step onto the ferry and breathe deeply, in and then out. And again. Everything that we thought was important can wait. Now is the time for entering that liminal space where we can attend to matters of the heart and spirit. Islands are mystical places – this island, this Abbey, invites you to surrender to a time of rest and restoration. Don't be there; be here. Breathe in, breathe out...

So, on the cusp of 2026 the New Year brings a full program of retreats, quiet days and other events that invite you to tend to your soul. We are repeating some favourites such as our popular Circle Dancing retreat and Moss! We have also invited new presenters to join us, including Susanna Pain and Mother Moira Evers. Our *Hush Quiet Days* remain a regular on the third Thursday of each month as does our weekly Eucharist each Wednesday. These are just glimpses – the full program is available on The Abbey website – www.theabbey.org.au and bookings are open now.

As well as the many opportunities to attend organised retreats, The Abbey offers a peaceful and beautiful environment for your own personal retreat. Our newly renovated Retreat rooms are popular as people discover the joy of staying in a simple, yet comfortable room nestled into the bush. Individual spiritual direction is available if requested.

On a different topic, I want to acknowledge that Anna Esdaile has decided that, after twelve years as Administrative Assistant at The Abbey, it is time for her to move to new ventures. Anna's cheerful welcoming presence and ability to keep the place running smoothly in an ever-increasingly busy environment have been the hallmarks of a job well done. Anna deserves a well-earned break as we wish her well in her future endeavours.

Save the date



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

FEBRUARY

- 1 Brigidfest
- 12 *Hush Quiet Day:*
Music that has Moulded Us
Facilitator: Sue Newcombe
- 15 Adriano Sangineto harp concert
- 17 Chat and chew –
come share a simple lunch together
- 20–22 Weekend retreat: Women's Storytelling
Facilitator: Lee Palumbo

MARCH

- 12 *Hush Quiet Day:*
Using collage to tell our hidden story
Facilitator: Jenny Wicking
- 15 Josh Layne harp concert
- 17 Chat and chew –
come share a simple lunch together



Fashion Show shines

Guests enjoyed a colourful parade of pre-loved outfits at St Peter's annual Op Shop Fashion Show

■ Marion Dewar

St Peter's Opportunity Shop in Leongatha held its annual Fashion Show in the church recently.

107 guests, 21 models, 8 dressers, 4 front of house personnel, 2 supper

makers and 1 month of last-minute preparation came together in a shining example of care for creation and community connection.

During the evening Op Shop Manager

Kaye Littlejohn supervised proceedings, Assistant Manager Coral Johnston arranged the music and the timing for the models, Heather Scott made the announcements, and Marion Dewar welcomed the guests.

Two hours flew by with categories including *Casual Attire*, *If You're Going to San Francisco*, *Rhinestone Cowboy*, *Colour My World*, *Evening Wear*, *Race Wear* and *Christmas*. Following the parade everyone enjoyed a delicious supper.

Racks of outfits, shoes and accessories filled the church hall, with mirrors and a fitting room in place, all was ready for guests and models to choose and make purchases from the items modelled as well as others specially selected for the occasion.

The evening was a joint venture of the Op Shop Committee and St Peter's Ladies' Guild. Proceeds from entry takings and sales will be directed to causes close to the hearts of members.

Marion Dewar is a Diocesan Lay Reader at Leongatha.



Meagan Schwarz (ABM Key Relationships Manager) pictured with Rev'ds Lloyd George and Sarah Gover

■ Sarah Gover

It all started back on 29 October, 1850, when six Anglican Bishops from Australia and New Zealand gathered at St James' Church in Sydney. They were in town for a month-long synod, and Bishop Selwyn seized the opportunity to raise awareness of the need to deliver mission supplies to Melanesia. This prompted the Bishops to discuss the need for engagement with Indigenous Australians and the Chinese community on the Goldfields, and by the end of the meeting the Bishops had formed the Australasian Board of Mission, now known as the Anglican Board of Mission (ABM).

Fast forward 175 years, and the spirit of that first gathering lives on. On 29 October, Gippslanders Bishop Richard and Bishop Jeffrey Driver, Rev'd Lloyd George (a former ABM missionary and standing in for our ABM representative Amy Turner) and Rev'd Sarah Gover (a former ABM staffer) joined current ABM partners from around the world, past and present staff, missionaries, and bishops – at St James once again. The mood was celebratory, but also reflective, as everyone paused to remember the journey, celebrate the milestones, and look ahead to the next 175 years.

ABM used this anniversary as a chance to take stock. There was a real sense of gratitude for what God has done, and a willingness to learn from past mistakes, with an honest acknowledgment of failures.

It was also a time to appreciate the present – giving thanks for strong relationships with partners, the dedication of staff, and the resources that keep the mission going. And of course, there was plenty of talk about the future: where God might be leading ABM next, and what changes might be needed to keep following that call. This hasn't been a simple process – it's taken several consultative retreats and planning days across the country to get there.

Before the big evensong celebration at St James and the following dinner, ABM supporters and Diocesan representatives spent two days diving into the outcomes of this journey. The process of written history at ABM was presented, one that doesn't shy away from the tough moments but also highlights the triumphs. The meetings included a strong emphasis on truth-telling and reconciliation, recognising that facing the hard parts of ABM's history is essential for moving forward. There seems to be an interest in the mission field right here in Australia, exploring how resources and approaches used overseas might work in a post-Christian context at home. We heard snippets from mission partners who are thriving and had motivating stories that can encourage and inspire aging and sometimes struggling Parishes.

It was inspiring to be in a room full of dedicated, creative people who have

a passion for empowering, resourcing and doing God's missional work. Dr Elizabeth Perry, a guest from the Anglican Alliance, said ABM is 'sparky people doing sparky things.'

As the agency's history continues to be written, there's a treasure trove of stories coming to light from the archives. Looking ahead to 2025 – 2050, ABM is evolving. Most people left Sydney the day after the celebration, but the ABM board members stayed on for two days, tasked with establishing and implementing a strategic plan for the future – looking at the next 25 years. It will be a strategic plan where relationships are important; one that prioritises, strengthens and values the work with Indigenous Australians as was proposed at that very first meeting in Sydney 175 years ago, encourages diocesan partnerships like our own with Gahini, and seeks to inspire supportive diocesan ABM committees to form.

ABM's story is far from over. If anything, it's entering a new chapter, one that's all about relationships, reflection, and reconciliation. There is hope and excitement to resource the Anglican churches in Australia to continue to look for what God is doing and to join in.

The Rev'd Sarah Gover has been serving at Traralgon as Lay Worker and most recently Parish Deacon.



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From the Editor



As we come to the end of 2025, I've been reflecting on what forms the heart of *TGA* — our stories. Every month the pages of *TGA* are filled with glimpses into life across our parishes; the acts of service, moments of faith, and the quiet but extraordinary ways God is constantly at work across the Diocese. These stories demonstrate that while Gippsland is a vast region, we are all deeply connected.

In the busyness of our lives, we can often feel scattered or pulled in different

December 2025

directions, and in these times our stories become even more important. A candid photo from a parish event, a perspective from a community member, or an update from a ministry team does more than fill a page in *TGA*; it strengthens the threads that bind our community together. Through these stories we can learn from one another, celebrate together, and help carry each other's challenges.

It has been my privilege this year to be Editor of *TGA*, and I have been immensely inspired by the stories you send in and your willingness to share them. Every submission, whether large or small, helps us tell a fuller, truer story of who you are as the

Gippsland Anglican community.

As we look forward to the festive season and the beginning of a new year, I want to thank every contributor, reader, and supporter of *TGA*. I would particularly like to thank Jan Down and Trevor Poulton who assisted me while I found my feet earlier this year, and enormous gratitude to Bishop Richard who continues to work with me on every edition of *TGA*.

I wish everyone a season of peace and renewal, and I look forward to building more connections in 2026 in the *TGA* community we all create together.

Krista Mountford

The closing chapter of ARPA's story

■ **Krista Mountford**

The Australasian Religious Press Association (ARPA) formally concluded its operations at its final conference on the Gold Coast, held 23–24 September 2024 and this month notified contacts of its finalisation arrangements, marking the close of a significant 50-year chapter in Christian publishing across Australia and New Zealand.

Established by editors and writers seeking fairer postal rates for religious publications, ARPA quickly grew into an

ecumenical, trans-Tasman network that offered vital professional support to those working in Christian media. Its annual conferences—hosted in locations across both countries—became key events on the religious publishing calendar. The awards presented at the conference dinner were often described as 'religious Oscars', celebrating excellence across writing, editing, design and journalism.

Over the decades, many publications benefited from ARPA's collegial support

and received awards, including us at *TGA*, receiving multiple awards over the years. Some include; Gold for Best Regional Publication in 2018, Silver for Best Regional Publication in 2021, and several awards in 2021, ranging from Best Faith Reflection (bronze to James Garth), Best Social Justice (bronze to Heather Toms) and Best Original Illustration (gold to Lynton Allan).

ARPA's closure marks the end of an important chapter in Christian media. For 50 years, it supported publications, promoted high standards, and recognised excellence, including through awards that encouraged writers, editors, and artists alike.

Krista Mountford is the *TGA* Editor and Diocesan Development Officer.



Jan Down *TGA* Editor in 2019 receiving Gold for Best Regional Publication at the ARPA Awards

Have your say in *TGA*!

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



* Please include your name and town for publication. Letters may be edited in the interests of clarity or space.



A Franciscan way of life

■ Jan Down

Creation, crib, cross and cup – these have been called the 4 C's of Franciscan theology. When I was introduced to them at a recent online gathering, I thought, 'That's just right. No wonder I'm a Franciscan!'

St Francis of Assisi loved the natural world and he loved the Creator. He did not confuse the two, and that is something I admire about him. He had a great reverence for creation because it was God's handiwork, seeing as brothers and sisters the birds and animals; fire and water; sun, moon and stars. He praised God for 'our Sister, Mother Earth'.

Francis was possibly the first to set up a life-sized crib, with real animals, in a cave at Christmas, to help make the earthy birth of Jesus real to people – the extraordinary moment of God becoming human in a messy world.

When you put creation, crib, cross and cup together, you have an incarnational theology that affirms the value of the physical world as created, loved and redeemed by God; that reveals God as present in creation and in the Eucharist. That is a theology that makes beautiful, biblical sense to me.

The Zoom session where I learnt about the 4 C's was a gathering of people from The Third Order of the Society of St Francis. It is a world-wide Anglican order, originally founded by St Francis in the 12th century and revived in the 20th.

It is an inclusive community for all who feel called to follow Jesus in the Franciscan way.

One of our members, The Rev'd Anthony Frost (Rector of the Parish of the Ascension in Burwood East) led our on-line discussion. He had found the 4 C's model via a Roman Catholic Franciscan website named 'Our Lady of the Pearl', and he brought it to life for us.

Those of us meeting were from the Victorian / Tasmanian Region of our Province of Asia-Pacific. We have a mixture of in-person and online gatherings to give everyone in our dispersed community a chance to get together. When we meet face to face we usually share in a Eucharist, lunch and discussion on a topic.

We are people committed to living by a Rule of Life which we each write for ourselves, but which is based on the Principles of the Third Order. The three aims of the Order are 'to make our Lord known and loved everywhere; to spread the spirit of love and harmony; and to live simply'.

Being a Franciscan has taught me the discipline of daily prayer, Bible reading and living my whole life with and for God. I'm a work in progress, but the Franciscan way helps me to keep growing. It has also given me a community to belong to which has been a constant, no matter how much we have moved around. The Third Order is a joy and a rock for me.

If anyone would like more information, you are welcome to contact me or visit our website: <https://tssf.org.au/>.

Jan Down is Chair of ACTinG (Acting for Creation Together in Gippsland) and a TGA representative for Sale. Email: acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au

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Mario Mendez on Unsplash

The power of song

■ Daniel Lowe

There's been a bit of talk in the media recently about the atmosphere after the recent Oasis concerts in Melbourne. Apparently, the crowd wasn't ready to let the night end, and, led by a busker whose moment had come, the hordes belted out Oasis hits in full voice at the nearby train station.

As one *Sydney Morning Herald* reporter described it:

As he played Oasis songs, thousands of people crowded onto the steps and footpath, joining in on choruses that threatened to lift the train station's famous bubble roof into the sky. It was just this beautiful warm moment that brought the city to life.¹

It reminded me of a similar experience years ago when I went to see the British and Irish Lions play the Wallabies in Melbourne. The rugby was great, but what really struck me was the singing. In the streets, in the stadium, and even in the large public toilets (with unexpectedly good acoustics), people sang with a kind of joy that was impossible to resist.

More recently I witnessed something similar closer to home. Our Year 12 students at St Paul's, in their final chapel service, sang together with that same mix of emotion – excitement, nostalgia, and the weight of school ending. Somehow, the act of singing familiar songs together gave voice to all of that at once.

Last year, I wrote about this idea in a blog post on *Synchrony*. The deep sense

of connection that comes from moving or singing together. Here's a portion of what I wrote then:

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.

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.

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... 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.²

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. Singing together is one of the simplest, most joyful ways we express that relational design.

The science backs it up. Professor Robin Dunbar from Oxford calls singing 'a mega-mechanism for bonding.'



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He explains:

Singing in the shower gives you a bit of an uplift, but when doing it communally, there's something about the synchrony of singing that creates this massive endorphin uplift ... The bigger the group, the better it works.

In one of his studies

strangers who sang together for just an hour 'emerged from the sessions with an unusually close bond, as if they'd known each other since primary school.' Singing, he concluded, was 'the ultimate ice-breaker.'³

Another researcher, Daisy Fancourt, has found that singing supports emotional regulation and builds resilience:

It takes our mind off problems, gives us an outlet to vent frustrations, and helps us build a sense of self ... People who are more engaged in singing have lower rates of depression and higher levels of wellbeing and life satisfaction than others.³

Here in Australia, unlike countries such as Wales, we haven't always been known as a 'singing nation'. As an article in *The Conversation* noted, our warmer climate has always drawn us outdoors

for other kinds of activity, while singing traditions in Europe grew around huddling indoors through long winters. Still, singing was once a major part of Australian life.

In the 19th century, pianos were treasured for family singalongs, choirs flourished, and singing was even introduced in Victorian schools for 'harmonising and refining the mind.'⁴ Work songs, too, were common. Morale boosters for those labouring through repetitive tasks.

That tradition has faded, crowded out by busyness, entertainment on demand, and the mistaken idea that singing is only for the talented few. Our churches are perhaps one of the few places where communal singing occurs regularly. But perhaps moments like those Oasis singalongs, or the growing popularity of pub choirs and community singing events, are signs that broader society is rediscovering something essential.

As we move toward Christmas, it's worth remembering that the first Christmas story was full of song. Mary sang her *Magnificat*, angels sang of peace on earth, and ever since, people have gathered to sing the story again. Whether it's in church, at a community carols night, or around the living room, singing

together is one of the simplest ways to feel connected. Connected to each other, to joy, and perhaps even to God.

So maybe this Christmas, as families and communities come together, we might rediscover that powerful gift of song, and find ourselves, quite literally, on the same wavelength.

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The Rev'd Canon Daniel Lowe is Senior Chaplain at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School and an ISCAST Associate Director.

How Christians Can Succeed Today

Reclaiming the Genius of the Early Church

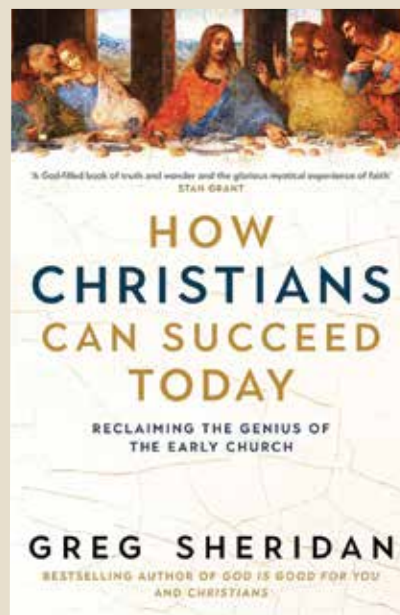
Greg Sheridan

Allen & Unwin, 2025

■ Richard Prideaux

Greg Sheridan, well-known Australian journalist and much-published author, has produced a book full of encouragement, especially perhaps for those thinking that the task of being a Christian is getting too tough. Sheridan has provided us with an outstanding account of early church history alongside an equally enticing account of the lives of seven impressive contemporary Christian believers and their story of coming to faith.

In the first section, Sheridan focuses on the impact of the coming of Jesus and his ministry with the apostles. Then follows the exceptional leadership of St Paul following his encounter with the risen Christ, resulting in his transformative missions leading eventually to Europe. A section on plagues and persecutions helps the reader to understand the heavy weather the earliest Christians had to handle whilst still making a transforming impact on Roman society. Another helpful chapter on slavery, money, and children



is followed by an excellent treatment of Augustine's impact, whom Sheridan calls 'the first and greatest modern'!

The second section takes us to our current experience as Christians, with challenging stories of contemporary Christians who have made an impact for good on many lives and, in many cases,

continue to do so. Many of these folks are well known, others less so. They include Leila and Danny Abdallah, Jess Echeverry, Robert Barron, Mark Varughese, Rosie Drum, Jim Baden, Andrew Mathieson, Dr Laurel Moffatt, Marilyn Robinson, Mike Pence, Niall Ferguson, Dallas Jenkins, to name a few.

A useful final chapter asks us to consider 'What is to be done' today. Despite the substantial impact of the stories in the previous section, there is still nothing easy in being a Christian in Australia today. I think the best way to answer this challenge is to read Greg Sheridan's book from the start! It has never been easy to be a witness to Jesus, but there is much in this account to encourage and enthuse us.

I warmly commend *How Christians Can Succeed Today*!

Richard Prideaux is a Diocesan Lay Reader at Bass/Phillip Island.

Made in Our Image

Stephen Driscoll

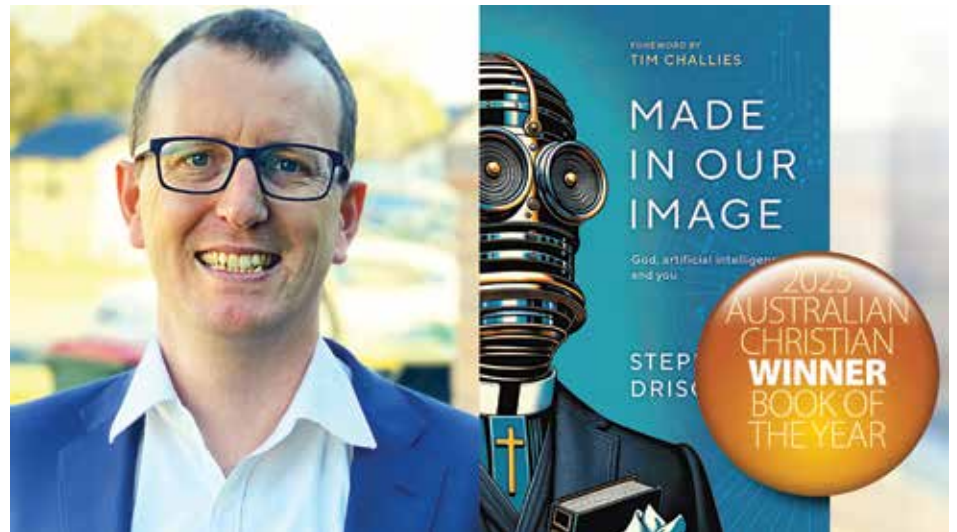
Matthias Media, 2024

■ Daniel Lowe

In *Made in Our Image*, Stephen Driscoll provides a thoughtful framework for Christians seeking to navigate the complex and rapidly evolving world of AI. Written for a broad audience, he offers a clear and engaging introduction to what AI is, how it works, and what it might become. The first two chapters form a technically robust yet accessible guide for the lay reader, offering just enough nuance to keep the more technologically literate engaged.

The rest of the book turns to a Christian perspective on AI, framed by the familiar biblical pattern of Creation, Sin, the Cross, and the New Creation. This structure anchors a fast-moving and sometimes bewildering topic within the grand narrative of God's work in creation and redemption. It reminds readers that new technologies do not stand outside God's purposes but belong within the same moral and spiritual universe as all human endeavour. It's a simple yet effective approach, allowing the challenges of AI to be viewed within a much broader understanding of human creativity and responsibility.

The Creation chapter tackles the question of identity, and I think this is a helpful place to start. As AI becomes more adept at imitating human thinking, questions about what it means to be human and what is unique about humanity have been thrust to the forefront of public discourse. One of the biggest fears (or hopes, for some) is that AI might one day supersede humans and leave us as, at best, second-rate citizens and, at worst, redundant organisms to be enslaved or destroyed. Driscoll concludes with the reminder, 'I know computers lack the



thing that makes us so special: they lack the Spirit of God,' a line that beautifully captures his confidence in the enduring distinctiveness of human beings made in God's image.

Having laid some important groundwork, the next chapter, titled 'Less Dead Than the Others – Sin and Artificial Intelligence,' is, in my view, the book's strongest. Here, Driscoll leans into the idea that humanity can use tools such as AI for good or ill, reminding us of our fallen nature and proclivity to misuse the tools we make, as well as the amazing blessing that wise use of tools can be for humankind. 'AI increases the power of the human race to both create and to destroy. Because of sin, we know in advance that AI will be used in evil ways'.

If there is a missed opportunity here, it lies in the absence of a more explicit theology of tools as applied to AI. The concept is certainly implied as Driscoll treats AI as an instrument shaped by human purpose. But a fuller exploration could have deepened the book's theological contribution. Even so, it remains an excellent and thought-provoking chapter.

The following chapters, which address the Cross and the New Creation, are less compelling. Driscoll's aim may have been to end with an accessible, gospel-centred reflection, but these sections feel more like an evangelistic presentation illustrated by AI anecdotes than a continued theological engagement with technology. The framework that initially served the discussion so well begins to overshadow it, leaving AI as a colourful backdrop rather than the central conversation partner.

Despite my criticism of the final chapters, I would heartily recommend *Made in Our Image* to any Christian trying to come to grips with the emerging world of AI and is looking for a great place to start. Driscoll's writing is engaging and accessible, with minimal use of jargon (both technical and theological) and contains just enough humour to keep the reader entertained. In a marketplace saturated with technology and speculation, this is a welcome addition to the conversation.

The Rev'd Canon Daniel Lowe is Senior Chaplain at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School and an ISCAST Associate Director.



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Your voices shape our shared story.

To our readers, thank you for welcoming each edition into your homes, churches, and communities. Your support and interest strengthen our mission of connection across the Diocese.

As we celebrate the festive season, may you experience peace amid the busyness, joy in community, and the comforting presence of God's love. Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a gentle, hope-filled start to 2026.

With warmest thanks and blessings,
Krista Mountford (*TGA* Editor)
and the *TGA* Committee



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