



**P9**  
Celebrating  
the ministry of  
Bevil Lunson



**P13**  
Swan Reach's  
120th  
anniversary

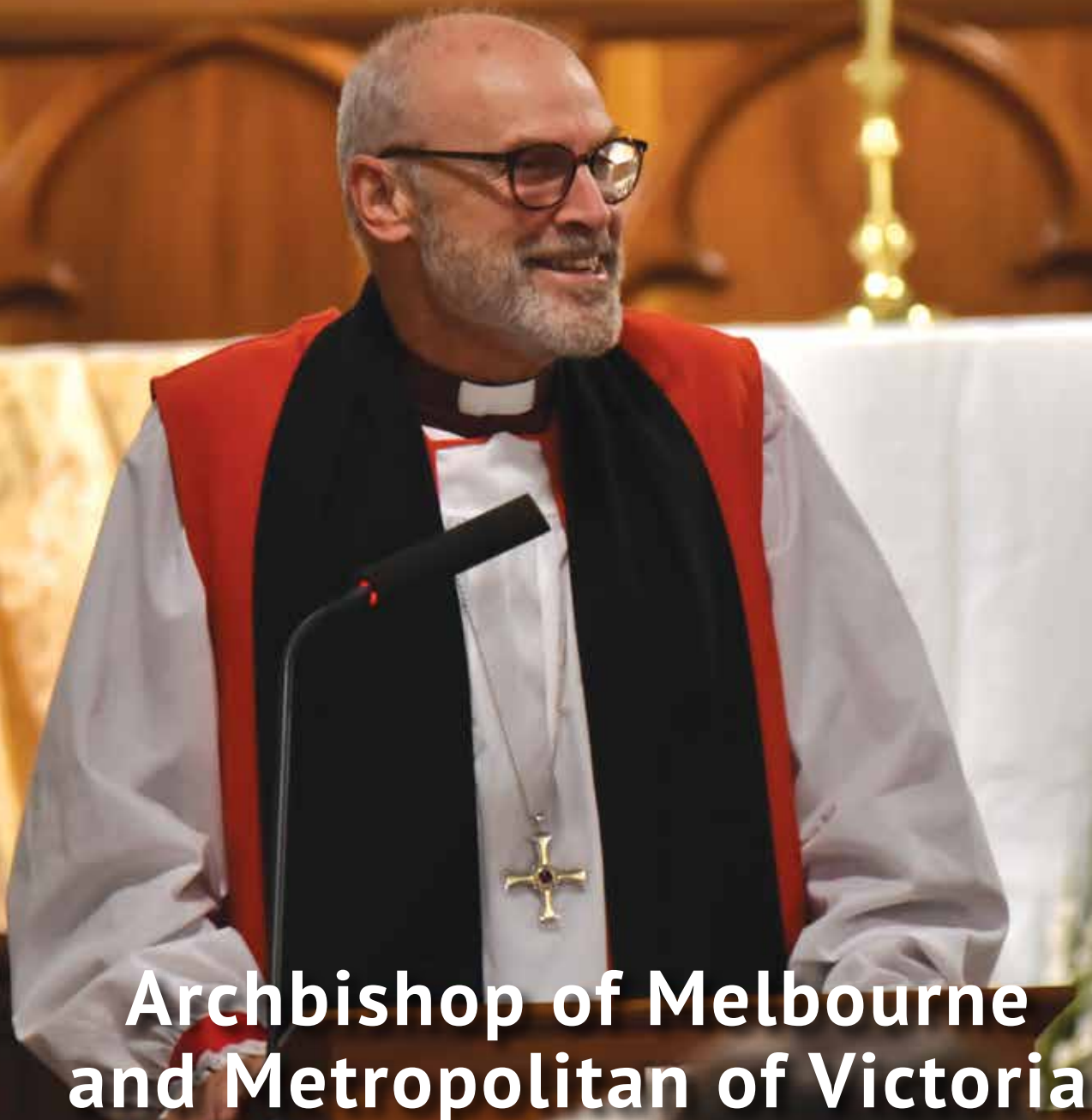


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# The Gippsland Anglican

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## Archbishop of Melbourne and Metropolitan of Victoria

The Most Rev'd Dr Ric Thorpe was formally welcomed  
to Gippsland at the 2026 Synod Eucharist

(See pages 3 and 4 for Archbishop Ric's sermon text)



# AI – who benefits?

*Magnifica Humanitas* – ‘Magnificent Humanity’ – is an Encyclical Letter signed by Pope Leo XIV on 15 May 2026, the anniversary of an earlier social encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (‘Of New Things’) from Pope Leo XIII in 1891, written in response to the challenges of the Industrial Revolution. His Holiness has likewise addressed the challenges of the digital revolution – in particular the rapid rise of Artificial Intelligence, or AI.

Papal encyclicals carry significant moral authority within the Roman Catholic Church – including its schools and universities, hospitals and agencies – and beyond. *Rerum Novarum*, for example, had a part in shaping public debate around labour rights, and was cited by Justice Higgins in 1907 when setting out a rationale for fair wages in Australia (see Maurizio Brambatti’s article in *The Conversation*, 26 May 2026).

As such, they warrant careful consideration by the other half of the world’s Christians, and all who are open to being formed and informed by a venerable tradition of philosophical and theological ethics. An example of the latter is the presence of Christopher Olaf, co-founder of AI company Anthropic, at the formal presentation of the Encyclical, who acknowledged that companies like his need moral guidance to guard against the incentives that can easily conflict with responsible development of technology.

Far from presuming a privileged position from which to ‘pontificate’, Pope Leo readily acknowledges the church’s shortcomings when it comes to uses and abuses of technology, especially as these enabled slavery and other colonial ills. Indeed, it is from that perspective that Pope Leo ‘critiques the technocratic paradigm for the way in which it concentrates wealth and power in the hands of an elite few and increases precarity and fragility everywhere else.’ (Victoria Lorrimar, *Eureka Street* 36.10)

*Magnifica Humanitas* reminds us that technology is not neutral, and warns of the risk of digital colonialism and other new forms of slavery. As a ‘construction site’ for our age, will we use AI to build a tower of Babel – that hubristic shortcut to heaven – or something that genuinely benefits all humanity, and indeed all creation? In other words, as with all innovation, it is important to ask *cui bono* – who benefits from it, who is served by it?

Being people of faith doesn’t equate to being ‘Luddites’ or anti-progress. Christians are certainly not opposed to, or ungrateful for, the extraordinary blessings that science and technology have brought to many aspects of human experience. You wouldn’t be reading *TGA* in this format were it not for computers, the internet, and even the printing press! We use AI at the Registry Office to help with minute-taking and to improve efficiency in some areas.

As Stephen Driscoll observed in his book *Made in Our Image: God, Artificial Intelligence and You* (reviewed in *TGA* in December 2025), we are created as technological beings. Take a passage like Isaiah 28:27-29, in which the knowledge and wisdom required to use the right tools to thresh dill, or beat out cummin, or mill grain is described as being a gift from God.

Yet Driscoll, too, warns of the unintended consequences of this tear-away technology which has us – as it were – building the aeroplane whilst flying it. One example he cites is the risk of a further erosion of trust in the established structures and order of society with the capacity for misinformation and ‘deep fakes’ that AI can generate – something we have already seen play out in the present Middle East crisis.

The trouble with an over-reliance on AI is partly what is thereby circumvented, namely work. Helen Collins, who teaches Practical Theology at Trinity College Bristol, argues that Large Language

Models (LLMs) like that used in Chat GPT are insidious short-cutting instruments ‘because they enable quick, disembodied cognitive gratification, which hides the costs of its production and ruins people for genuine human intelligence.’ (*Seen & Unseen*, 26 May 2026)

Collins expands on the latter point thus: ‘Various studies are showing the damaging impacts of AI ... From reductions in critical thinking, to increasing our biases and stereotyping, to destroying diverse and indigenous forms of knowing, to lowering brain engagement and making us cognitively lazier – using LLMs has a real and detrimental impact on thinking skills.’

If that is so, and – as Pope Leo cautions – the pace of AI’s evolution far outstrips our capacity to research and account for its effects – then this alone is a deeply troubling prognosis, for, as Collins predicts, ‘The more often we take short cuts, the harder we will find it to go the long way around when we need to!’

The fact that AI already seems to be everywhere is no more reason to be passively resigned to its presence and influence than would be accepting unlimited access to social media by young people as inevitable, despite what we are coming to learn about the likely long-term results.

Pope Leo draws not only on a deep theological tradition in *Magnifica Humanitas* but also on a broad cultural heritage, including Tolkien’s literary masterpiece *Lord of the Rings*, in which Gandolph counsels:

It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till.

*The Return of the King*, Book V, Chapter IX



# Gippsland Synod 2026

The Rev'd Kathy Dalton welcoming everyone to Country at the Synod Eucharist

## ■ Synod Eucharist Sermon 2026, Archbishop Ric Thorpe

Acts 1:1-11, Mt 28:16-20 Gippsland Synod, Sale 15/5/26

Brothers and sisters, it is a joy to be with you.

I know you are faithful and resourceful people – and perhaps like many of our own clergy and lay leaders, you might also be tired.

It's been a long week! And a long decade so far!

You are serving churches and communities in a time of change and pressure.

Yet there are also signs of courage, creativity, and hope.

So, I want to speak today not about anxiety, but confidence.

Not about how the Church is doing, but about who Christ is.

Because Ascension reminds us of this great truth:

Jesus Christ is Lord and he has not abandoned his Church.

In Acts 1, Christ ascends into heaven. In Matthew 28, the risen Jesus says: *'I am with you always, to the end of the age.'*

So, which is it? Has he gone? Or is he here?

The answer is: through the Ascension, Christ is no longer confined to one place, one moment, or one people.

The risen Jesus reigns over all things and is present to his people everywhere by his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus.

And that changes how we think about mission.

Today I want to offer three encouragements:

- Christ is ahead of us,
- mission belongs to all of us,
- and we must be creative in Spirit.

### 1. Christ has gone ahead of us

The disciples stand gazing upwards as Jesus ascends.

And the angels are wonderfully practical. The disciples are staring into the sky, and the angels basically say: *'You can stop looking up now. There's work to do.'*

Because the mission of God is continuing.

One of the dangers for the Church is that we can begin to speak as though everything depends on us: our energy, our ideas, our resources, our survival.

Sometimes in the Church we speak as though the future of Christianity depends entirely on the next diocesan spreadsheet.

But the Gospel begins somewhere else: with the living Christ already at work in the world.

The Ascension of Jesus means there is no place beyond his reach: no neighbourhood, no school, no workplace, no family, no lonely person, no struggling community.

We are not carrying Jesus into empty places.

We are discovering where he is already present.

That is the difference between anxiety and mission. Mission is not panic. Mission is participation.

After a few years of replanting into a closing church in the East End of London called St Paul's Shadwell, we said to our small groups to stop meeting on the church site and to move out into the community. They were like mini churches in different places – the upper room of a pub, a café called the Alpha Café run by Turkish Muslims, an apartment in the middle of a housing commission.

It felt fragile. Some wondered whether it was 'really church'

Which, in Anglicanism, is often the first sign that something interesting may be happening.

But over time relationships formed, prayer emerged naturally, and people who would never attend a Sunday service encountered the love of Christ. The pub church began to run an Alpha Course where people started coming to faith. The Alpha Café's Muslim owners heard we ran the Alpha Course – which is an introduction to the Christian faith and they said, please can you run it here in the Alpha Café? They sat through every session and loved it.

We didn't just ask, 'How do we encourage people into our church?' but started asking, 'Where has Jesus already gone ahead of us?'

That is true for every parish and every diocese.

The risen and ascended Christ is already ahead of you in your communities.

And friends, that means we can move from fear to hope.

### 2. Mission belongs to all of us

Mt 28 Jesus says: *'Go therefore and make disciples...'*

He doesn't say *'Create a good Sunday service and hope people come.'*

The Church is not just a gathered people.

The Church is a sent people.

Mission mostly happens Monday to Saturday.

The primary location of Christian witness is ordinary life.

It is conversations at work, care for neighbours, presence in schools, hospitality, listening, praying, building trust, loving communities faithfully over time.

When Jesus says: *'You will be my witnesses,'* he is not asking everyone to become experts or extroverts.

A witness simply speaks about what they have seen and known.

We need to hear this: you do not need to become something or do anything impressive for God to use you.

My friend Henrik knew this. He is a banker. He was negotiating a deal and it was stuck. They had spent several hours getting nowhere. He got up to make a coffee at the side of the room. And he quietly prayed, *'Lord please break through in this deal. Please open the way. Help me. Amen.'* He went back to the table, and he said they quickly reached an agreement and the deal was done. A small prayer had changed everything.

Some of the most powerful signs of the kingdom are very small.

A church opening its doors during the week. A toddler group. A listening café. A chaplaincy. A shared meal. A conversation after years of silence. A congregation choosing presence over prestige.

The kingdom often grows quietly before it grows visibly.

And perhaps one of the great opportunities before the Church is simply this: to reconnect – patiently, humbly, lovingly – with the people around us.

Not as projects to fix.

But as neighbours to love.

In our diocesan vision conversations in Melbourne, one of the things we are learning again is that vision does not start with a glossy brochure or a heroic strategy.



It is about listening together: to God, to one another, and to the communities we are called to serve. We have just finished Listening in Lent where 2700 voices from inside and outside the church contributed to our listening. We are now discerning what God is saying to us.

Sometimes the most important question is not 'What can we sustain?' but 'What is God calling us to notice?'

Because many communities are longing for connection, meaning, hope, and belonging.

There is one more thing Ascension means.

### 3. Jesus is praying for us

Jesus Christ is not absent from his Church.

The New Testament repeatedly tells us that the ascended Christ is seated enthroned, seated at the right hand of the Father who is almighty God.

He is reigning over his Church.

That is not a statement about furniture in heaven.

It is a statement about authority.

The crucified and risen Jesus now reigns over all things.

And remarkably, the New Testament also says he intercedes for us.

Jesus is praying for his people.

Which means the Church is not sustained simply by our efforts, our meetings, our strategies, or our resilience.

The Church is sustained by the living Christ who holds us before the Father.

It is too easy to think that everything depends on you.

The future of your parish.

The finances. The morale of the congregation. The mission. The growth. The problems no one else sees.

And after a while, that burden becomes very heavy.

But Ascension is good news for tired disciples.

Because the Church does not sit on our shoulders.

It rests in the hands of the ascended Christ.

The one who sends us is also the one who sustains us.

And because he reigns, we can work and witness with hope rather than desperation.

Not every prayer will be answered in the way we expect.

Not every church will flourish in the same way.

Not every initiative will succeed.

But Christ remains faithful to his people.

The disciples in Acts stand at the beginning of an uncertain future.

They are small in number.

They have little power.

Soon they will face opposition, confusion, even suffering.

And yet the Gospel spreads across the world.

Why?

Not because the disciples were extraordinarily capable.

But because the ascended Christ continued to act through them by the Holy Spirit.

That is still true today. In every parish, every small congregation, every fresh expression, every struggling community, every quiet act of faithfulness ...

Christ is present. Christ reigns. Christ intercedes. Christ is at work.

And friends, that means we do not need to lead the Church anxiously.

We can pray. We can listen. We can act courageously. We can love faithfully.

And we can trust Christ with his Church.

### Conclusion

So, friends, on this Ascension weekend, hear again the promise of Jesus: *'I am with you always.'*

The ascended Christ still reigns.

Still calls. Still sends.

Still intercedes for his people.

Still works beyond the walls of the Church.

So let us not lose heart.

Let us be courageous, patient, generous, ready to witness in the whole of life.

Because the risen and ascended Jesus is already ahead of us, inviting each one of us to join in, knowing that he is also praying for us.

Amen.

# Communications Strategy Working Group report

## ■ Les Ridge

It has often been said that, if an organisation or group is to enjoy lasting success, good communication is a 'must-have'. When you then combine that with the adage, 'There's nothing more permanent than change', the pressing need for an effective communications strategy becomes clear.

For many, communication falls into two distinct camps; one would be parish-wide, which involves end-of-service notices, pew sheets and perhaps a parish newsletter or social media. The other is diocese-wide, which would include the Bishops *Ad Clerum's* and the Gippsland Anglican social media pages. But first and foremost, it would be *The Gippsland Anglican*, and it was *TGA* and its potential changes that sparked the most responses from Synod delegates on Saturday afternoon and again on Sunday morning.

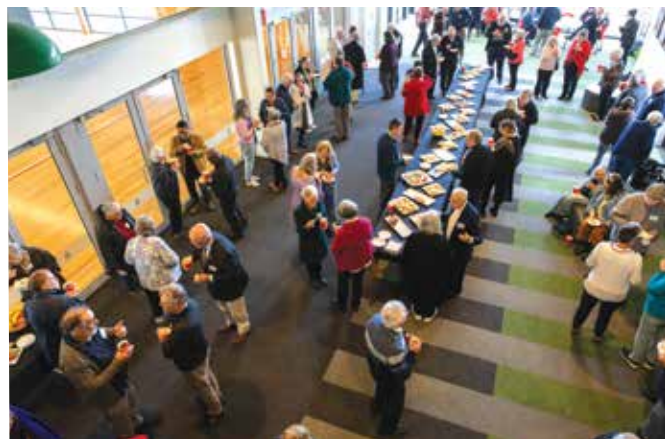
At the 2025 Synod it was requested that a working group form and develop a Diocese-wide communications strategy.

Over the past year, the working group conducted a comprehensive review of diocesan communications, examining existing channels, audience needs, staffing, costs, and best

practice across the wider church. The review also identified challenges including duplicated work, inconsistent messaging, uneven parish representation, limited digital reach, rising print costs, and the need for stronger coordination.

In response, the strategy proposed a more integrated and sustainable approach to communication that supports the Diocese's mission and ministry. Key recommendations included: establishing a 0.7 Communications Coordinator role, transitioning *TGA* to a bi-monthly publication, strengthening digital communication and social media, improving internal communication structures, and building stronger engagement with local media and the wider community.

Just the mention of the possibility of moving from 11 issues per year to only six by way of reducing printing and production costs had some members on their feet. But the most impassioned pleas came from those



who greatly valued the printed page.

Remaining on the topic of fewer issues of *TGA* per year, it was observed that one positive outcome would be the possibility of introducing more in-depth articles, slow journalism, and a reduction of filler articles.

Out of this came an understanding that there is a pressing need to pursue every established and emerging communications media in a dynamic and strategic manner. Who we are, what we do and have to offer and most importantly the gospel message of forgiveness and salvation should be shared far and wide, making use of every form of communication currently available.

# ACTinG for Creation report

## ■ Les Ridge

Jan Down, Chair of ACTinG and former editor of *TGA*, presented a report on last year's Synod motion from ACTinG (Acting for Creation Together in Gippsland).

The motion was firstly about encouraging a deepening understanding of the theology of creation and further action on climate change. In response, ACTinG had provided: a monthly bulletin, with resources for both theological reflection and practical action; further resources on the ACTinG pages of the website; a workshop on active hope delivered in Warragul, Lakes Entrance and Sale; and the launch of the Season of Creation at the Cathedral, with Jack Beamish as speaker.

The motion also asked ACTinG to advise Bishop-in-Council on how to develop greater resilience to the impacts of climate change within the diocese. Jan said this will be addressed via a Community Resilience Mapping Workshop to be held on 18 June (see page 20) and will be facilitated by Friends of the Earth.

Jan also flagged this year's launch of the Season of Creation in the Cathedral on 23 August at 5pm, with guest speaker Jo Knight, CEO of Anglican Overseas Aid and author of *Called to Care*, who will come to speak in person. The service will also be live-streamed.

Jan noted at the end of her talk



that while last year's motion was about climate change, ACTinG had broadened its focus since then, and the group is now also working on a biodiversity project, 'branching out' from the Prayer Trees.

In the discussion which followed, Lay member Lyndell Parker from the Parish of Westernport spoke to the ACTinG imperative of reducing landfill and increasing recycling. Lyndell identified Op Shops as a significant means of 'recycling today to save tomorrow'.

Other working group reports at Synod included: Family Violence, Governance, Diocesan Clearance Officer and Kooyoora, Diocesan Outreach and the Budget Review.

Les Ridge is the *TGA* Representative at Bass/Phillip Island and a member of the *TGA* Editorial committee.

# Called to serve

## Stories of women in ministry

L-R: The Rev'd Sarah Gover, The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra, The Rev'd Elwyn Sparks and Lay Reader Ms Lacy Biggs

### ■ Les Ridge

The first item on the business paper for Sunday was a panel interview session focused on Women's Ministry. The Venerable Sue Jacka facilitated this inspiring session, as the panel members shared their particular journey to ordination.

While each story covered a unique experience, there were also common aspects that each member shared. Foremost among them were resilience and a call to ministry. While God's tap on each shoulder came in many forms and circumstances, it wasn't something to be ignored and was even voiced by friends and colleagues in some cases. Then came the absolute need for lasting resilience in the face of bigotry, bias and ignorance – all the while maintaining composure and not resorting to ill-advised reposts.

Membership of the panel included The Rev'd Alwyn Sparks, The Rev'd Christine Angus, The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding and The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra.

### The Rev'd Sparks

The Rev'd Sparks related how she attended a pastoral care weekend, led by Charles Bailey and John Bell. It was the chalice and patten at the Eucharist taking on divine significance that spoke volumes to her vision of ordained ministry. Prior to this event, she had felt that God was calling her, but the exact nature of that calling had always eluded her.

Following that significant weekend, on her 41st birthday she commenced the long journey towards eventual ordination. Along the way, the distinctive diaconate was a challenge, but her vision

of the chalice and patten remained, and 11 years later Elwyn was priested.

### The Rev'd Angus

Rev'd Angus' journey started in childhood, as exposure to church life and practices via Sunday School prompted her to seek advice from a friend she met at the Anglican school her parents sent her to. It was her friend Edith who suggested that Christine eventually investigate what religious roles might be open to her. Thoughts of entering the priesthood seemed to be out of the question at that time.

A move to the Sisters of the Church at St Michael's opened several possibilities for Christian service, including the reality of service not being hemmed in by the four walls of the church – God's work was everywhere. Time spent at St Peter's Eastern Hill exposed Christine to some of the opposition to Women's ordination that was circulating at that time. A move to a church in Beacon Hill provided a more accepting environment, but firm thoughts of being ordained still hadn't formed at this time. An invitation to a Trinity College open day led to her enrolment a year later and in Christine's words, 'I knew I was in the right place'. Ordination followed in Ballarat.

### The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding

Some may have wondered why Dean was a member of this panel, but all became clear as he declared his extensive knowledge of Luke's gospel and how Luke was a serious champion of women in ministry. But further to that, Dean's personal faith in Jesus

was through God's grace expressed through the lay and ordained ministry of women.

Another significant influence came from his Year Seven home economics teacher. She was of the brethren faith and her open defiance of the restrictions her denomination placed on women in ministry was inspirational. It was her witness as a true spirit filled evangelist that first gave Dean access to the truth about Jesus.

Two years later in Year Nine, the witness of a Salvation Army band master led him and half of his class to make a commitment to Christ. It was later that year that Dean was confirmed by Bishop Jed Muston. At age 17 on (fire related) Ash Wednesday 1982, Dean matriculated to Melbourne University to study dentistry. His parents made it possible for him to take up residency at Trinity College, where he was exposed to the fledgling Movement for the Ordination of Women and, by contrast, also to learn how to fight Lygon Street and find a cheap falafel!

Few in the college were aware that Dean was still experiencing stress from his exposure to the Ash Wednesday bush fires, but a very young Kay Goldsworthy offered him a cigarette to calm his nerves. While he didn't take the offer up, he did nonetheless appreciate the spirit in which it was given. Seen in retrospect, Dean's journey to eventual ordination brought him alongside many young women of faith with a strong vision, who eventually made their vision a reality. Even to the position of Archbishop of Perth!

### The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra

Keren shared that growing up in a Dutch reformed family, she had always had a sense of a longing for God. Early exposure to the elements of the Eucharist and family Bible studies gave Keren a solid grounding in the spiritual and theological aspects of her growing faith.

When asked what she was going to do when she grew up, her answer at that time was depressingly clear: if she had been born male, the priesthood would be calling. But as a girl, it would be Keren's passion and gifting in music that led her to a music scholarship upon leaving school.

This led her to St Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney and a conversion experience which created a desire to be confirmed. This put her at odds with the conservative church leadership of the time. However, God's grace was sufficient for Keren to be

confirmed, and membership of the Cathedral singers (distinct from the Cathedral choir) provided a Spirit-led way forward. Through the many engagements outside the Cathedral that the singers attended, Keren was exposed to a wide variety of church experiences around Sydney. It was during a singing engagement at St Mary's Waverly that she experienced the distinctive ministry of Austin Day, the then rector of Christ Church St Laurence. It was during Austin's prayers of Benediction that Keren experienced a physical sensation that drew her towards the Sanctuary, but it became clear to Keren that leading the Benediction was the preserve of a priest and at that time she believed that only men could hold that position.

'What is that all about?', she thought; and that question didn't ever go away.

The question finally resurfaced

in 2003, when Keren accompanied a friend who was being made a deacon in Bathurst. During the service there was a woman being ordained priest and while this was happening Keren once again felt that irresistible pull towards the sanctuary.

It was only her understanding of what a 'good little Anglican' should do that stopped her from kneeling in front of the bishop to be ordained.

After this challenging experience Keren was approached by three people who weren't privy to her ongoing guidance and declared that she would make a really good priest. Keren reflected that usually the promptings of the Holy Spirit are a soft and gentle whisper. But in her case, it was a massive two by four that got slapped up the side of her head.

At the completion of her master's degree, Keren reached out to the dioceses of Brisbane and Newcastle, with Brisbane reacting positively. Her expectation was to spend a year of discernment and then move through the various stages leading to eventual ordination. But an invitation from the Archbishop to a discernment conference led directly to Keren being accepted as an ordinand.

Keren shared that, while there were many setbacks to her journey to ordination and that everyone has a unique experience, there was an overall sense of 'rightness of place' that identified the right path for her journey to ordination.

The panel offered Synod members an honest and inspiring glimpse into the personal journeys behind ordained ministry for women. While each story was unique, together they reflected deep faith, resilience and a willingness to follow God's call despite challenges along the way.



The Rev'd Elwyn Sparks during her sermon at St Anne's Chapel

## A Eucharist of celebration and reflection

### ■ Les Ridge

The 30th anniversary of the ordination of women as priests in Gippsland was a significant item on the business paper for the second session of the 41st Synod. So, what better way to celebrate this important milestone than with a time of worship, prayer and contemplation in the St Anne's chapel of Gippsland Grammar.

The celebrant of this celebratory Eucharist was The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra, with a sanctuary team comprising Preacher: The Rev'd Elwyn Sparks; Deacon: The Rev'd Sarah Gover and Liturgical Assistant: Ms Lacey Biggs. Ms Caroline Martin

was the gifted singer, who was ably accompanied on piano by Ms Tanika Richards.

The Rev'd Elwyn Sparks shared some of her journey to eventual ordination. Her message included many of the points of opposition and experiences of the glass ceiling that would have resonated with many gathered on that day.

At the outset, Elwyn focused on the unique form of ministry that women bring to our acts of corporate worship. She reflected on the evident enjoyment by the congregation of the all-female led service; many faces

reflecting the joy and acceptance that pervaded the gathering that morning.

A well-crafted and delivered sermon is like a sumptuous feast, in that it will stimulate and satisfy to the extent that a doggy bag will be needed afterwards. Elwyn's message did all of that, and the subsequent leftovers gave many something to chew over during the following Synod business.

Les Ridge is the TGA Representative at Bass/Phillip Island and a member of the TGA Editorial committee.

# Building bridges

## Small-town community connection in action

### ■ Keren Terpstra

Chaired by Archdeacon Graham Knott, the outreach panel held on Saturday afternoon at Synod this year took its inspiration from St Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 5:14: *'The love of Christ urges us on.'* This verse, which was a keystone of the Bishop's Presidential Address to Synod, set the tone for the discussion that followed.

If Christ's love compels action, what does that look like in the varied and often complex life of small towns across Gippsland?

Archdeacon Graham framed the discussion with the image of the *pontifex* – the bridge-builder. The central question was simple but searching: *how do we build bridges with those in our communities?*

While each panelist spoke from a different local context, there was a shared recognition that small towns tend to fall into four broad categories:

- Towns experiencing outward urban expansion
- Towns that have declined following the loss of key institutions or industries
- Towns seeking to reinvent themselves
- Towns built around a particular local economy (for example, milk production or forestry)

Each setting brings its own opportunities and constraints. The examples shared are not models to be copied, but invitations to reflect: *what might God be energising us to do in our own locality?*

Geoff Kennedy described how Toora reimagined church presence by letting go of a declining 19th-century church building and relocating outreach to a shopfront on a shop in the centre of town. With open-door worship, everyday conversations, and practical help such as gardening, the parish has created gentle, relational opportunities for connection, pastoral care, and gospel witness. The story showed that when a building becomes a barrier, making space for people can help build bridges instead.

Sharron Lane from Westernport shared how a vision of people walking together in Gippsland grew into the Camino, a local pilgrimage that began modestly and has expanded quickly through strong community support. Rooted in attentiveness to the Holy Spirit and the question, *'What's in your hand?'*, the initiative resonates with wider creativity, including the 'New Earth' storybooks. Its central insight was that creativity fuels mission by helping people notice and join in what God is already doing.

The Rev'd Belinda Seabrook recounted how, after the February 2024 storm devastated Mirboo North, the parish waited prayerfully before responding to God's prompting to *'Plant Hope'*. That simple call grew into a ministry of distributing plants, sharing meals through *Hope Kitchen*, and creating openings for conversation, prayer, and

pastoral care, with the wider community gradually joining in. The story highlighted outreach that was Spirit-led rather than program-driven.

The Rev'd Lyndon Phillips explained that Rosedale's outreach has grown from long-standing relationships with local schools, where the parish serves through religious education, breakfast clubs, literacy support, and practical care. As these connections deepened, the church began to see its people as everyday chaplains already embedded in community life, while leadership development and creative reflection broadened that sense of mission. Even difficult property decisions were understood as part of discerning where God's life was most active.

A recurring question addressed the risk of failure. Could these initiatives have gone wrong?

The panelists' responses bore a striking consistency.

- Three initial Camino registrations were not a failure, but an invitation to trust what God might do.
- In Rosedale, the presence of need made doubt irrelevant.
- In Mirboo North the only true failure would be disobedience to God's prompting.

Across the panel, there was a shared conviction:

*Nothing is wasted when offered in faith. Even apparent setbacks become part of growth.*

### Looking ahead: recognising God at work

The session concluded with two questions that will shape parish reporting in the coming year:

- Where have you seen God at work in your community recently?
- Where have you seen opportunities to join in God's work?

These questions shift the focus from programs to perception – from what the church is doing to what God is already doing.

As Archdeacon Graham's initial challenge suggested, outreach begins with bridge-building. But it is not primarily about constructing something new. Rather, it is about noticing where Christ has already gone ahead – and having the courage to follow.

The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra is Dean of Sale.



An artwork created by the parish of Rosedale demonstrating their reach amongst the local community

# Celebrating the ministry of Bevil Lunson

Celebrating a lasting impact on both the church and the wider community L-R: Bishop Richard with Barbara and Bevil Lunson

## ■ Krista Mountford

After nearly two decades of faithful and compassionate ministry in Orbost, The Rev'd Bevil Lunson is stepping into retirement, bringing to a close an extraordinary chapter in the life of St James' Memorial Church and the wider community. Alongside his wife Barbara, Bevil has devoted himself wholeheartedly to serving others, leaving a legacy that reaches far beyond the church walls.

Although Bevil officially 'retired' once before, those who know him would agree that ministry has never simply been a job for him – it has been a way of life. Since arriving in Orbost in 2007, he has remained a constant and reassuring presence in the parish, providing pastoral leadership, spiritual guidance and practical support to countless people across East Gippsland.

At the centre of Bevil's ministry has always been a deep commitment to people. Whether preaching at Sunday Eucharist services, supporting families through weddings and funerals, or simply sharing a conversation over a cup of tea, he's brought warmth, empathy and authenticity to every interaction.

Bevil's journey to ordained ministry was shaped by a strong commitment to social justice and caring for those often overlooked. Before entering theological studies, he completed studies in welfare and counselling, experiences that grounded his ministry in real-world compassion and service. Ordained as a Deacon in 2000 and later as a Priest in 2004, Bevil carried that outward-looking approach into every role he held.

Over the years, he served in a variety of ministries including work with Anglicare's Lazarus Centre, St Paul's Cathedral Melbourne, the Mission to Seafarers and as Disabilities Officer within the Diocese of Melbourne. Each role reflected his passion for supporting people on the margins and ensuring the Church remained connected to the wider community.

That same spirit became a defining feature of his ministry in Orbost. Under Bevil and Barbara's leadership, St James' became known not only as a place of worship, but as a hub of care, creativity and community connection. In 2013, Bevil established the St James' Food Pantry, which continues to provide vital assistance to local families. He also supported the ongoing success of the church's Trash and Treasure Op Shop, creating important opportunities for outreach and fundraising.

Bevil's gifts extended well beyond pastoral care. A talented cook and gifted performer, he brought joy and laughter into parish life through cabarets, themed dinners and productions by the St James' Players. His creative energy helped foster a vibrant and welcoming church culture, with many parishioners fondly remembering his comedic performances and memorable musical appearances. His famous Christmas cakes, jams and preserves also became much-loved local favourites.

Throughout all of this, Barbara has been an indispensable partner in

ministry. From preparing orders of service and managing parish administration to supporting countless parish activities behind the scenes, her dedication and generosity have helped sustain the life of the parish for many years. Together, Bevil and Barbara have formed a remarkable team, giving tirelessly of their time, energy and care.

Bevil's ministry has also been marked by a strong ecumenical spirit. He built meaningful relationships across denominations, regularly bringing together members of St James' and the Uniting Church for shared worship and fellowship. His ability to connect with people from all walks of life earned him deep respect throughout the community.

As Bishop Richard reflected during Bevil's farewell service, it is people like Bevil who give the Church credibility in a time when trust in institutions is often fragile. His ministry has always been genuine, humble and grounded in service rather than recognition.

Retirement now offers Bevil and Barbara an opportunity for well-earned rest after more than a quarter of a century in ministry. While they may be stepping back from formal responsibilities, their impact on Orbost and the Anglican community will continue to be felt for many years to come.

Krista Mountford is the TGA Editor and Diocesan Development Officer.



## Dedicated priest travels countryside for services despite shrinking congregations

The Rev'd David Perryman would like to see ministry re-imagined to meet the needs of the modern world

■ Rachael Lucas – kindly republished with permission from ABC News

It's a Sunday morning in the rural Gippsland town of Briagolong, three hours east of Melbourne, and The Rev'd David Perryman, equipped with a file of readings, sheet music and a guitar, prepares a dash of Holy Communion wine and a single wafer biscuit.

***'The church building may shut, but the church is still gathering,'***  
***The Rev'd Perryman said.***

His service begins at 8:30am, when the congregation – comprising a single parishioner – arrives at the 118-year-old All Saints Anglican church.

Bruna Robinson, who has attended Sunday mass at Briagolong for 28 years, enjoys discussing the lessons of faith with The Rev'd Perryman, comforted by the notion that someone cares for her in the face of life's challenges.

She recalls when the church, now slightly disheveled with cobwebs and abandoned Christmas ornaments, was once a gathering place for the local community.

'There was a lot more people, a lot more engagement inside church and outside church. We had our service and were joined afterwards for morning tea,' she said. 'We had playgroup, community health sessions. We would sit and knit and crochet or just chat as a social gathering.' But now, she's the lone, and soon-to-be last, parishioner at All Saints, which was recently marked for closure.



The all-ages service at Stratford

### Mobile ministry

The Rev'd Perryman delivers two ceremonies each Sunday – an 8:30am service in Briagolong or Munro on alternating weekends, followed by a main service in Stratford, which is live-streamed and attracts viewers from interstate, overseas and a local nursing home. But it's a race to get from one service to the next.

'It is a bit of a mad dash, and it makes it really difficult when you are just offering that ministry and that worship and then you're running off down the road,' he said.

The Parish of Avon, comprised of Stratford, Munro, Briagolong and the Dargo district, once included the Dargo church, which closed in 2012. At St Mary's in Munro, built in 1922, anywhere from four to seven parishioners attend a service.

As church buildings age and maintenance falls behind schedule, The Rev'd Perryman and his volunteer team contend with everything from possums to spiders, gum leaves, fallen branches and storm damage.

'There is recognition that a lot of these beautiful buildings do take a lot to maintain, and not just in terms of bricks and mortar, but the grounds as well,' he said.

For Elizabeth Bates, who has attended the Munro service on and off for 50 years, preserving the Munro church is about preserving town infrastructure, legacy and identity.

'The people who built this church and the families that I've known who've passed away now, they worked so hard to build the Christian faith in this community for us, and I just want to enjoy it' she said. 'I really miss the intimacy, the feeling of worship with a group of people. It's not the same on social media as it is to come here. It's something that is really important in my life. It gives me strength.'

The dilemma of aging, under-utilised buildings is forcing the Anglican church to think creatively about finding new ways to deliver services. With the forthcoming sale of the Briagolong church, a less formal incarnation of the Briagolong service has already been trialed at the Briagolong Community House, attracting a gathering of about seven people.

'The church building may shut, but the church is still gathering,' The Rev'd Perryman said.



Elizabeth Bates hopes the Munro church will remain open for social connection

***'It can be a bit chaotic, but what I really love is seeing everyone being able to find a place and everyone being able to be involved, being able to have a voice and be included,' he said.***

### New pathways forged

At Holy Trinity in Stratford, established in 1868, children run around a kindergarten table beside a lectern, as The Rev'd Perryman rushes through the back entrance to tune his guitar and rehydrate for the 10am service.

'We do try and offer a bit of everything for everyone,' he said.

The church has merged a free-range Sunday school, craft, live music and audio-visual projections with the more formal, traditional elements of a service.

'It can be a bit chaotic, but what I really love is seeing everyone being able to find a place and everyone being able to be involved, being able to have a voice and be included,' he said.

As life becomes more financially and socially difficult for people, in an era where stripped-back social interactions have become the norm, The Rev'd Perryman's inclusive philosophy extends to a vibrant calendar of parish-organised activities.

From music for young children and parents to family movie nights, men's breakfasts, fundraising raffles, dinners, the annual church fete and Blessing of the Pets, low-cost opportunities for social connection extend to the broader community.

'I'm very thankful that I don't run this race alone,' The Rev'd Perryman said. 'Anything that we do here or out in the community is only made possible because of our wonderful volunteers.'

But with limited funds, eroding infrastructure and an aging population, The Rev'd Perryman believes fresh perspectives and creative thinking are critical for the long-term sustainability and relevance of regional parishes.

'At some point ... the conversation has to change from just trying to do 'more with less', to actually trying to be strategic in how we approach this from a different direction,' he said. 'We need to find an out-of-the-box way of doing ministry and being a church.'

Photos courtesy of Rachael Lucas – ABC News

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# Beautiful, raw, and honest Events at Yinnar South

■ **Melissa Thomson**

Twin events, 'On Being Mortal', a group reflection led by death doula The Rev'd Sue Newcombe, and 'Aidios', an art installation by local artist Liz Tyler, provided a safe place for people to talk about death and dying at the Yinnar South Historic Church on the weekend of 11 – 12 April.

A small gathering attended The Rev'd Sue's session 'On Being Mortal', where she led an intimate discussion

on what death means for those experiencing or contemplating their own death journey or that of someone close to them. As a death doula, The Rev'd Sue is trained to help people navigate their end-of-life journey. A safe space, where, by mutual agreement, thoughts expressed wouldn't leave the room, the session was a time of sharing thoughts and experiences as well as asking questions. Some of what was spoken

was hopeful and some bittersweet, as people shared their fears and feelings and beliefs about death and dying.

The art installation 'Aidios', a Greek word meaning 'timeless eternity', was also well-attended, even though the weekend was a rainy one. The installation by local artist Liz Tyler, who has been exploring archways as a point of transition, consisted of five large monotype prints, four of which were

'Aidios', an art installation by local artist Liz Tyler

suspended from fishing line within the church, and one which was attached to the pale blue entry door. Their arched shape complemented the arched windows of the church.

Each of the prints contained dancing or falling figures, lit by the natural light filtering through the church windows. The positioning of the prints was done in such a way as to have the blue paint of the church interior above and the white paint below, and many of the visitors commented on how well the colour enhanced the artwork, remarking that the blue made them think of the sky or of heaven.

A few of the visitors got an added tour of the Yinnar South countryside as they got lost while looking for the church and arrived by circuitous route! Visitors were both impressed and touched by the exhibition. One lady, Michelle, commented,

We loved the experience and wanted to linger. Somehow, even the dreary weather today just added to the drama. Beautiful, raw, and honest.

Both events were held on the weekend on 11 – 12 April, with 'Aidios' held from 1 – 4pm both Saturday and Sunday, and 'On Being Mortal' held from 11am – 12 pm on Saturday only.

Melissa Thomson is the TGA representative for Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar South.



Dana Flahavin, daughter of artist Liz Tyler admiring the installation

# Swan Reach's 120th anniversary



The Rev'd Laurie Baker, Rae Whelan, Bishop Richard, Betty Byrne and Matt Wilson during the cutting of the 120th birthday cake

## ■ Brian Norris

St Columb's Anglican Church Swan Reach, in the parish of Tambo, celebrated its 120th Anniversary on Sunday 3 May 2026. The church was dedicated on the same date in 1906 by Bishop A.W. Pain, first Bishop of Gippsland. The church was part of the Lakes Entrance Parish until 1919 when it was moved to Bruthen Parish, now Tambo Parish.

About 60 people were present on 3 May including Bishop Richard, who celebrated and preached, former clergy of the parish, the Rev'd Laurie and Heather Baker and Rev'd Barbara

Logan together with Rev'd Sue Newcombe, Associate Regional Dean. Long term members of the congregation were also present including Betty Byrne who has attended St Columb's since Christmas Day 1942, and Rae Whelan who has been a member since 1960. Warden Matt Wilson, who joined the congregation recently, was baptised at St Columb's some 50 years ago.

In his sermon Bishop Richard said, 'We are here today to give thanks for the foresight and hard work of our forebears in seeing the desire for a church in Swan Reach accomplished, which is

sweet to the soul, to echo the text from Proverbs that Bishop Pain preached on, on 3 May 1906.' And later on, 'For here too is space for us to gather, to find our place in the great story of salvation, to play our part in singing that ancient and ever-new song; and in all we say and do, to bear witness to the roomy house of the Father, and the roomy table of the Son, which we approach again today with grateful hearts and with open hands, ready for Holy Spirit's leading into God's good future, in him who is our way, our truth, and our life.'

The service was a happy, inspiring, and uplifting occasion and included the singing of *Happy Birthday* and three cheers at the beginning of the Bishop's sermon.

A light lunch was served in the church hall after the service which included the cutting of the 120th birthday cake by the Bishop, Betty Byrne, Rae Whelan, and Matt Wilson.

The current priest, Rev'd Brian Norris, declared the day to be a wonderful success and thanked the organising committee for their work and everyone for their attendance.

A video of the service may be found on YouTube at: <https://bit.ly/4dFTSZU>

The Rev'd Brian Norris is the Priest-in-Charge at Tambo.



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# Gippsland Grammar alumni among Victoria's top designers at Melbourne Museum

Gippsland Grammar 2025 graduates Emma Best and Enzo Blackmore with their furnishing pieces currently on display at Melbourne Museum

Gippsland Grammar is proud to celebrate the outstanding achievements of 2025 graduates Emma Best and Enzo Blackmore, whose VCE VET furnishing works are currently on display in *Top Designs 2026* at Melbourne Museum.

In a significant accomplishment, Emma and Enzo's works are the only two woodwork pieces selected for exhibition, highlighting the exceptional calibre of their craftsmanship and design.

At the exhibition launch, Emma received special recognition as a recipient of a Highly Commended award in the Product Design category, presented as part of the inaugural Swinburne University Top Design Awards.

Presenting the award, Professor Blair Kuys acknowledged the exceptional standard of entries, noting they

were selected for their 'quality of execution, innovation and potential impact,' and highlighting the strong emphasis on sustainability and thoughtful design across the exhibition.

'It made for a very strong competition to judge. I am excited to see such a wealth of talented young designers – you should all be very proud of yourselves,' he said.

Professor Kuys also noted that the introduction of four award categories marked a new initiative within *Top Designs* to further recognise outstanding student work.

Now in its 26th year, *Top Designs* is part of the prestigious VCE Season of Excellence and showcases exceptional student work from across Victoria. This year, just 81 exhibitors were selected

from more than 1000 applications, placing Emma and Enzo among the state's most accomplished emerging designers.

Emma's work – a refined nest of circular tables crafted from Victorian ash with jarrah inlay – impressed judges with its innovation,

craftsmanship and sustainability considerations. Enzo's beautifully constructed Victorian ash side table, finished with a rich walnut stain, highlights precision and attention to detail.

The exhibition is open at Melbourne Museum until 26 July, offering visitors the opportunity to experience the creativity and ingenuity of Victoria's top design students.

Gippsland Grammar Head of Visual Arts and Technology Zoe Hilliar, who attended the launch alongside Emma and Enzo's families, congratulated the pair on their remarkable achievements.

'The School is incredibly proud to see their work recognised on such a significant stage,' Ms Hilliar said. 'I encourage anyone visiting Melbourne to take the time to experience the exhibition – the quality of work is exceptional.'



The circular nesting tables designed and crafted by Emma Best

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## Interacting through service and leadership

Georgia and Isabella raising funds through cupcake sales

awareness of staying safe online through a casual clothes day, where secondary students were encouraged to wear blue in support of the cause.

The day also featured a range of student-led fundraising activities, including a bake sale, sausage sizzle, bracelet making and bracelet sales, with the school community enthusiastically supporting the initiative.

The event highlighted the passion of students to stand together for important causes while demonstrating the positive difference young people can make through leadership, teamwork and community service.

The team raised over \$1,300 in support of the 'Do It For Dolly' cause.

Making a difference in the community while developing leadership skills is the focus of a new initiative at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School's Traralgon Campus, with students forming a new Interact Committee in partnership with the Rotary Club of Traralgon.

Open to Year 9, 10 and 11 students, the club aims to bring together young people who are passionate about volunteering, organising events and supporting worthwhile causes within the broader community. Guided by Rotary mentors and St Paul's educators, students will have opportunities to strengthen their leadership skills while embracing the Rotary motto of 'Service Above Self'.

As its first activity, the St Paul's Interact Club organised 'Do It For Dolly Day', raising funds and



St Paul's Soul Band providing musical entertainment

## Carpark transformed with colourful messages

Colourful chalk messages and symbols of unity transformed the St Paul's Anglican Grammar School's Traralgon Campus carpark into a vibrant outdoor canvas as students marked National Reconciliation Week with creativity and reflection.

Junior School students filled the space with handwritten messages and drawings inspired by themes of unity, respect and connection, turning an everyday area into a shared expression of learning and understanding.

The activity provided a meaningful opportunity for students to engage in the significance of National Reconciliation Week, encouraging them to reflect on the importance of coming together and recognising shared histories and futures.

Across the school community, the initiative was celebrated as a simple but powerful way for young learners to express their thoughts and contribute to ongoing conversations about respect and reconciliation.



Jordy takes part in a hands-on learning experience through chalk drawing



Learning and growing in the JAFFAS garden

### ■ Dean Spalding

In the Parish of Trafalgar we have two after-school discipleship groups for primary-school-aged children (P-6) called JAFFAs. I don't know if it's apocryphal but I think the name for these groups came from the phrase 'Jesus, A Friend For All' and certainly this is the basis on which the two groups are run.

Because of the wide age-range and the inter-generational nature of the experience – the volunteer leadership are mostly retirees – we try to make the activities ones that have an easy entry point (to include our youngest students) and which lend themselves to flexible extension and opportunities to 'go further'.

Typically, every session (which runs from about 3:30 – 5:00pm) has a biblical theme (compassion, impartiality, forgiveness and patience, for example). We usually have a bible story (most commonly from the gospels or the Book of Acts) which we make available through the engaging videos put out by the 'Saddleback community' in California called *Stories of the Bible* – which are very well-researched and theologically astute as well as excellently pitched at primary years.

A typical session also includes a craft. Hospitality is also a hallmark of the program – the session always starts with sharing of a cut-fruit selection, and

often finishes with a snack, and if it's close to someone's birthday – cake!

There is a lot of serendipity in the planning. In Olympic years we've been known to raid the biblical epistles for inspiring memory verses about running races, being disciplined as preparing athletes and the like. Sometimes we substitute scripture with narratives about characters in church history – especially missionaries and other heroes of the faith. Sometimes our program is more heavily influenced by liturgical seasons, especially around Easter and Christmas.

For the past eight weeks we went right away from our conventional formula and have developed a vegetable garden from a bare backyard adjacent to St Mary's Hall, where the thinning mulch layer was beginning to admit weeds last summer.

There was a little bit of pragmatism in dealing with the emergence of the weeds without using herbicides – the first term of school had already started, and we didn't want to spray so close to where our students play in the backyard. At the same time, we wanted to do something slightly agricultural or horticultural: to get students out of their comfort zone; and to give our students experiences that might help them better understand the parables of Jesus that often

take an experience of growing things for granted.

We wanted students to sow seeds, dig the ground, dig in natural fertilisers, see earth worms (don't hurt them – they're allies), weed and nurture plants, see cabbage-white-moth caterpillars.

The planting session on the day we put the seedlings in looked utterly chaotic – could these seedlings survive the rough handling? Yet out of this risk has grown an incredibly abundant and productive vegetable patch. Each of the dozen or so children (in Trafalgar and Thorpdale) have their own 1 by 3 metre plot to care for.

About a month ago we began some modest harvests and the aim has been for children to see up-close the process from picking, washing, chopping and meal preparation. Then we model hospitality as we sit down and share the delicious meals we make with the produce. Here we aimed at young-taste buds which are still 'broadening' their repertoire.

So, we made the first few safely 'accessible'. Week One was rhubarb and apple crumble (served with vanilla ice-cream); Week Two was a mountain of young silverbeet leaves finely chopped, mixed with ricotta cheese and wrapped into rolls in puff-pastry and baked to make silverbeet and ricotta rolls; Week Three sausage rolls made from pure ground beef (which was on special at our local IGA, preservative free) with generous amounts of finely grated turnips (the loveliest turnips you ever did see!) and copious amounts of curly-leaf parsley (dark green leaves have iron – iron is your friend!). Next week we are broadening the cultural boundaries and making snow-pea and bok-choi stir fry to eat with steamed rice with a drizzle of soy sauce.

The challenge of the end of term is that all the traditional child-challenging brassicas mature for harvest! Broccoli should be the easiest if it survives possible inclusion in the stir fry. But then come the triple challenges of cabbage, brussel sprouts and wombok.

The atmosphere in these JAFFAs sessions is a little like watching repeats of *The Good Life*! And the scriptural nourishment to complement the culinary nourishment has included many parables: The Sower; The Fruitless Fig Tree That Got a Second Chance; the Wheat and the Weeds.

There have also been opportunities to illustrate the abundance of God's natural systems in appreciation of which we're learning principles of 'paying it forward', 'reciprocity', 'non-transactional' engagement with grace and abundance; the 'impartiality of God' who sends rain on the just and the unjust.

And there are many opportunities for prayers of thankfulness in the tradition of 'All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above'. The students are learning stewardship and care for land.

They are also put in contact with aphids, lady bugs, blackbirds (providing free digging!), stick insects and cabbage-white caterpillars (upon which there is a bounty!)

The horticultural principles are a little Amish – but those principles often grew out of some excellent ana-Baptist (anti-Christendom) theology and a good deal of close observation of the way that God has set up this world that we might steward it well and delight in it. And did you know that the Amish farms of the USA are some of the most productive of all of the States? And the Amish have no bills to pay from the large multinational corporate giants who sell pesticides, herbicides and synthetic fertilizers – which often harm natural systems and consumers and are very costly.

The garden also slows everyone down a little and allows for a better quality of conversation. Much to be thankful for!

JAFFAS and SCAMPS are two significant parts of a growing commitment of the Parish of Trafalgar to facilitate integrated Christian discipleship 'From Birth to 25'.

JAFFAS runs in the St Mary's Hall (40 Contingent Street, Trafalgar) from 3:30 – 5:00 pm on Wednesdays; and in the St Mark's Hall (Cnr Robinson and Johnstone Streets, Thorpdale) from 3:15 – 5:15pm on Mondays, in school terms. Enquiries to 0421216825.

Next time from the Parish of Trafalgar: How our parish is thinking we might engage those rarest of people in our church community – those from 12–25 years of age.

The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding is the Rector of Trafalgar.



## Around the campfire with Jesus

Gathering around the fire for fellowship, food and faith in Churchill

### ■ Melissa Thomson

'Around the Campfire with Jesus' was the theme of the third regional family service for the Anglican churches of the Latrobe Valley. Forty-two people, including nine young people, attended the service which was held at the Co-operating Church in Churchill.

The wet weather did not dampen the spirits of the attendees. The afternoon service began outside under the verandah where a fire pit had been set up. Youngsters and some adults were keen to get their fingers in and make their own damper dough prior to plastering it onto a stick and heading for the fire pit. It was a modern-day re-creation of Jesus' charcoal fire on the shore of the Sea of Galilee as told in John 21:9.

After making damper, everyone headed inside the church where a cellophane fire, lit within by torches, flickered invitingly. Chairs were placed in front of it in a semi-circular arrangement for everyone to sit. Ruth Place led a time of communal singing and word games based on the bible reading from John 21:1-19. Liz Husdon Cooper and Emma Hudson told the Bible story, reading from 'The Big Rescue Bible' and using cardboard figures made by Fay Foley.

Small groups were formed to discuss the bible reading. Key themes of 'trust', 'forgiveness', 'sending out' and 'commissioning' were discussed. Group leaders reported back key elements of their group discussion. The teenage group shared their thoughts on how difficult it can be to forgive others and the immensity of forgiving repeatedly. On being asked 'What has God given you to spread the word?' they shared that their immediate thought had been the Bible, but then decided that God had given them a voice with which to share what He had done for them, enabling them to tell their own personal story.

Following the small group discussion there was some more singing, then fish fingers were handed around as a reminder (21st century style!) of Jesus cooking fish for His disciples.

A meal was then shared together, which was served by a group of volunteers from the Churchill congregation. It was a great evening of fellowship.

These regional family services are held monthly on the third Sunday of each month.

Melissa Thomson is the TGA representative for Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar.



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# Our communities respond to DV Sunday

## ■ Jenny Wicking

The month of May has been set aside to build awareness of family and domestic violence within our community. DV Aware Sunday was a national day for Anglican churches to raise awareness of domestic and family violence and to support the Church's work of prevention and response. There were many candlelight vigils and buildings lit up in purple across the nation, and in Gippsland, for people to attend to remember those whose lives had been affected by violence.

In response to the national remembrance of family and domestic family violence the Family and Culture Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia identified 3 May as DV Aware Sunday. Parishes were encouraged to set aside Sunday, 3 May to remember those who have been affected by Family and Domestic Violence. Parishes were invited to light a candle, to pray, to speak about violence in their sermons and to stand together and say NO to family and domestic violence.

It was encouraging to hear that many parishes responded.

Prayers were offered in remembrance of those who have lost their lives and/or are traumatized by domestic and family violence.

Prayers were offered for those who are perpetrators of violence that they may seek assistance to change their behaviour.

Some parishes in Gippsland reflect on DV Sunday below:

### Westernport

Now that we have enshrined in Victorian legislation about 'coercive control' often leading to physical violence, our sermon covered the fact that men can also be victims of family violence.

Family violence is a spiritual sickness where one person attempts to override the will of another either through emotional, psychological, or physical violence. It is essentially the 'I will' spiritual sickness of Satan to steal, kill or destroy.

We pray that as a church we will seek to develop a much more theologically based and nuanced understanding of this complex situation.



The Rev'd Paul Woodcock and Malcom Reed reading some of the Common Grace prayers

### Warragul

This year the leaders in each of our services let people know it was DV Sunday and prayed for it. In our sermon series on Acts, we were up to Acts 16, where the theme that God is in the business of setting people free resonated with the day, and this was included as an application.

### Heyfield

We placed a candle on a purple cloth on a table, placed the prayers from Common Grace around the candle and invited people to come up and light a candle and/or pray one of the DV Sunday prayers on the Common Grace website: [www.commongrace.org.au/domestic\\_violence\\_pray](http://www.commongrace.org.au/domestic_violence_pray)

### Bairnsdale

At the beginning of the service we lit a candle with the words 'We Say NO to DV'. Malcolm, Cheryl and Paul read out some of the Common Grace prayers. Parishioners were invited to light a taper from the candle at communion time. It was very encouraging to see how many men and women stood alongside each other to light a taper.

In closing, the feedback I have received from parishes is that after the services, conversations took place over a cuppa. We are becoming more aware of and willing to have conversations about the complexities of family and domestic violence in our churches and communities. The Gippsland region

has high rates of family and domestic violence and sadly, East Gippsland has the highest rate in Victoria; so we need to build awareness. We have begun the journey.

The Rev'd Jenny Wicking on behalf of the diocesan Family Violence Working Group.



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## From the Abbey June 2026

■ **Cath Connelly**

Hello from beautiful Raymond Island.

I have just been sitting with our Prayer Tree. Following the heavy rain last night, the tree stands quietly today, basking in sunshine. The branches are heavy with the prayers and offerings of so many people who cross the grounds here at The Abbey.

Maybe these prayers are stories of hope, maybe they offer gratitude or speak to a longing. Each one is tied with intent, knowing that in some way the act of writing an intention, attaching it to our Prayer Tree and allowing it to linger long after leaving this place creates a collective sense of connection to others who have attached their prayer and to the One who hears and receives these prayers.

At this time, the tree is covered in an abundance of brightly coloured stars. This is the creativity of our Gippsland Grammar Bairnsdale campus who recently spent the day here living into the Easter story. Each student wrote their Easter intentions onto a star and attached it to the prayer tree. The theme for the day was *Reach for the Stars*. What joy!

There is something deeply peaceful about simply observing the Prayer Tree and all the attached prayers. There is a quiet presence of a tree that carries so many hopes and dreams. A time of reflection...

### Save the date



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

#### JUNE

19 – 21 Weekend retreat  
*Stepping into Elderhood*  
Facilitator: Janet Munro

#### JULY

9 Hush Quiet Day *Lessons from the Oak*  
Facilitator: Su Mills

10 – 12 Weekend Retreat *Celtic Spirituality*  
Facilitator: Cath Connelly

20 – 23 Mid-week retreat *Pilgrims of Renewal:  
From Wilderness to Glory*  
Facilitator: Dennis Webster

24 – 26 Weekend Retreat *Moss!*  
Facilitator: Kelly Skilton

#### AUGUST

13 Hush Quiet Day *Two Celtic Saints:  
St Non of Wales and St Ia of Cornwall*  
Facilitator: Cath Connelly

14 – 16 Weekend Retreat *Circle Dancing*  
Facilitator: Robyn Sussems

21 – 22 Diocesan Retreat  
*An Experience of my Relationship  
to my Faith Using Creative Arts*  
Facilitator: Dr Jenny Orford Hill

Details of all these events can be found  
on our website [www.theabbey.org.au](http://www.theabbey.org.au)



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## Creation care in the garden

### ■ Jan Down

I am not yet winning on the weed-control front at home – in fact, I have a long way to go.

For one thing, I spend too much time on the computer and not enough outside, noticing the weeds and doing something about them.

For another, my body won't cooperate for long periods at a time. It's a rather sad irony that just as I've learnt to slow down enough to actually enjoy gardening – even weeding – and find it one of the best forms of meditation for me, I can't do much of it because of a grumpy back. Yanking out kikuyu is not for me anymore.

But I enjoy what I do, and love watching the birds while I'm out there. The magpies always want to join in the work, so we sing choruses of praise together.

And there are a couple of things I've found that work well in managing weeds without resorting to poison. The greatest success I've had is from a Jackie French tip, which is 'just plant more'. Where I've planted shrubs close together, the weeds don't have much of a chance.

Another tip that's been helpful is to plant ground cover that only has one 'trunk' (e.g. Grevillea Royal Mantle). It spreads to cover a lot of ground but doesn't put down lots of new roots on the way. This means that when you need to weed, you can gently lift a branch, weed, and then let it down again. Much easier!

The downside to this kind of ground cover is that if a plant dies, you lose

cover in one go. I am hoping that growing two of the same plant might prove some insurance against that kind of loss, though I haven't tried it yet.

Jackie French has written a whole book about weeds: *Organic Control of Common Weeds*. I must borrow it from the library again. She has a lot of helpful ideas, and a different attitude to weeds. See her Weed Myths here: <https://tinyurl.com/5d7fb9wb>

If you have any good weeding tips, you can send them to [acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au](mailto:acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au).

Jan Down is Chair of ACTinG (Acting for Creation Together in Gippsland) and a TGA representative for Sale.

## Season of Creation Launch at the Anglican Schools Evensong



**23 AUGUST, 2026**  
5PM



**ST PAULS CATHEDRAL, SALE**  
AND ONLINE

**Speaker: Jo Knight**  
CEO of Anglican Overseas Aid  
and author of **Called to Care**

Followed by light refreshments



For more information:  
[davidp@gippslandanglicans.org.au](mailto:davidp@gippslandanglicans.org.au)

# Concrete foundations

## How strength-based mission transforms communities over time

■ Meagan Schwartz

*In March 2026, ABM's Meagan Schwarz led a pilgrimage to the Episcopal Church of the Philippines. While there, they visited a community that participated in an ABM funded project in the early 2000s. Meagan reflects on that visit.*

On the surface, it is just a concrete slab. We walked across it almost without noticing, far more drawn to the large buildings and the trucks loaded with bags of palay ready for milling and market.

But as I stood on it, covered in palay drying in the sun, I was quite literally standing on a piece of history, a living testimony to over 30 years of partnership for ABM and the Episcopal Church in the Philippines. It is also a powerful illustration of what strength-based mission and partnership can achieve over time.

This concrete slab belongs to the Holy Spirit Mission Multipurpose Cooperative, based at Holy Trinity Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Santiago. ABM funded the slab around twenty years ago, along with a small storage shed nearby. At the time, the project was modest but practical: a response to an identified need, supporting local farmers to dry their palay more effectively before milling and sale.

What no one fully predicted then was just how large an impact that small, concrete beginning would have.

### Starting with strengths, not deficits

The significance of this project lies not in the slab itself, but in the approach ABM and ECP took. Rather than treating the community as passive recipients of aid, ABM and ECP partnered with local farmers who already possessed deep agricultural knowledge, strong communal ties, and a shared desire to improve their livelihoods.

The funding did not replace local capacity, it amplified it. With better drying conditions and safer storage, farmers could produce higher quality palay. This led to better and more consistent prices at market. Income increased. Confidence grew. Most importantly, the cooperative began to see itself not as dependent on external help, but as capable of shaping its own future.

### Momentum that builds from within

What followed was not a new funding proposal – but community action.

The farmers themselves extended the drying area, volunteering their own labour so that every peso went further.

Increased and more reliable income allowed them to build another, larger storage shed. Later, the cooperative purchased shared harvesting equipment, further reducing labour costs and increasing efficiency of Coop members.

When the wet season posed new challenges, they responded from within. They invested in an electric dryer, ensuring year-round resilience. They installed the new dryer in the original ABM-funded shed: making the most of what they already had.

Each decision was locally led, locally owned, and rooted in the real conditions of people's lives.

### Partnership measured in decades, not projects

Too often, development is evaluated in short timeframes: outputs delivered, budgets acquitted, photos taken. But standing there, two decades later, tells a much deeper story.

What ABM helped to fund twenty years ago did more than improve rice processing, it set in motion a process of transformation. This is the hallmark of sustainable development: when external support sparks internal momentum, and when partnership creates space for communities to grow in their own way, at their own pace.

At its heart, this story reflects missional theology grounded in dignity, agency, and mutuality.



Fr Ralph (R) showing the Coop owned electric palay dryer at work

It echoes a strength-based approach that asks not, 'What is missing here?' but 'What is already present – and how can it flourish?'

### A living testament to a strong future

As I crossed the slab with my fellow pilgrims, surrounded by the growing rice paddies, I was reminded that mission is rarely flashy, but it is enduring. It creates a foundation from which future growth is possible.

The Provincial government had recently recognised their exceptional achievements by granting them a new rice mill. Fr Ralph, the Cooperative CEO and local parish priest, explained how it will serve both Cooperative members and other local farmers. Lower production costs and higher market prices for their produce means even greater financial stability for more people.

Concrete may crack, and buildings may age, but investments in people, relationships, and local capacity continue to bear fruit long after the paperwork is filed away.

This is what sustainable development looks like. This is what strength-based mission makes possible. And I am profoundly grateful, and proud, to be part of this living history.

Meagan Schwartz is a Key Relationships Manager at ABM.

## From the Editor



There is something deeply important about the way we communicate with one another as a Diocese. Our Gippsland community is spread across far distances and ranges from small rural parishes to larger regional centres. Communication is what helps us feel connected and informed.

At this year's Synod, the Communications Strategy Working Group presented its report after a year spent reviewing how we communicate across the Diocese (see page 5 for more information). The discussions that followed showed just how much people value staying connected – particularly through *The Gippsland Anglican*. There was strong feeling in the room about the role *TGA* continues to play in parish

## Recognising where God already is

life, not simply as a source of information, but as a way of sharing stories, celebrating ministry and reminding us that we belong to something bigger than our own local context.

The report itself recognised both the opportunities and challenges ahead: the need for clearer communication, stronger digital engagement, better coordination across ministries and parishes, and ways of sharing the life of the Diocese more effectively. But beneath all the practical recommendations was something much deeper – the understanding that communication is really about relationships.

That idea connected strongly with the theme of Archbishop Thorpe's homily at Synod, where he spoke about recognising where God already is. On page 3 he writes: 'We didn't just ask, *'How do we encourage people into our church?'* but started asking, *'Where has Jesus already gone ahead of us?'*

It is easy to think our ministry work always begins with our plans, our programs or our strategies. But often God is already present in the conversations taking place around kitchen tables, in acts of quiet service, in children's ministries, community meals, op shops and pastoral care.

One of the privileges of magazines like *TGA* is being able to glimpse those moments across many different communities. Again and again, the stories shared through *TGA* reveal signs of hope, generosity and faithfulness already growing in our parishes.

My hope is that *The Gippsland Anglican* continues to be part of that work with whatever changes may lie ahead and whatever form *TGA* takes: helping us stay connected, helping us share our stories, and helping us recognise where God is already at work among us.

**Krista Mountford**

## GIPPSLAND ANGLICANS COMMITTED - CONNECTING - CREATIVE

TOWARDS 125 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE REGION

'THE LOVE OF CHRIST URGES US ON' (2 COR 5:14)



In 2027 our Diocese will celebrate 125 years of ministry and service in Gippsland.

This milestone offers a wonderful opportunity for every parish and ministry centre to reflect on, celebrate, and tell stories of our share in God's mission to the world.

**Start the conversation in your parish today!**

**Contact the Venerable Sue Jacka with your ideas! Email: [suejacka@outlook.com](mailto:suejacka@outlook.com)**



We invite all parishes to begin thinking about:

**HOSTING A LOCAL CELEBRATION OR SPECIAL EVENT**

**SHARING STORIES FROM YOUR PARISH'S HISTORY**

**GATHERING PHOTOS, MEMORIES, AND SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS**

**RECORDING REFLECTIONS FROM LONG-STANDING MEMBERS**

A diocesan calendar of events will be developed for 2027, as well as stories being published in different media forms.

*Join Us for a Family  
Worship Service  
Growing Good in a Messy World  
Matthew 13:24-30*

**Sunday July 19th 4:30  
St James Anglican Church,  
100 Grey St Traralgon**

*Casual, fun and family-friendly. You are invited to  
bring some food for a shared meal afterwards.*

For more info call Sarah on 0430082865

These Regional Family Services will be monthly, on the 3rd Sunday.  
August's service will be at the Co-operating Churches Churchill, 1  
Williams Avenue, Churchill, 16 August 4:30



GIPPSLAND ANGLICANS

## Youth Ministry Catchup

A regular time to pray  
and share youth ministry  
hopes, plans, ideas and  
resources. All welcome.

First Tuesday each month, 7:30pm at: [tinyurl.com/GIPPSYOUTH](https://tinyurl.com/GIPPSYOUTH)

For more info contact [daniel@warragul.anglican.org.au](mailto:daniel@warragul.anglican.org.au)



## Wednesday Weekly Bible Study

If you would like to meet with others in Gippsland to read and discuss the Bible, you are welcome to join The Rev'd Bec Hayman's Zoom Bible study group on Wednesday evenings from 8:15pm-9:00pm.

Bec Hayman is the Anglican priest in the cooperating Parish of Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar.

For more information or to receive the Zoom link contact Bec by telephone 0467 023 363 or email: [becca\\_mike@yahoo.com](mailto:becca_mike@yahoo.com)

## There You have gone before me

By Krista Mountford

**In the wind, You are already moving.  
In the silence, You are already speaking.  
In the broken places, You are already healing.  
In the ordinary, You are already present.**

**I look to the horizon,  
Yet You meet me on the road.  
I search the heavens,  
Yet You walk among Your people.**

**Teach me not to lead, but to follow;  
Not to carry You, but to notice You;  
Not to strive for distant wonders,  
But to see Your grace at work today.**

**For wherever love takes root,  
There You have gone before me.**

## EVENTS

### JUNE

22-25 Clergy Conference, The Abbey

28 5pm Provincial Choral Eucharist  
St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne

### JULY

5-12 NAIDOC Week

## 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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## Gippsland Anglicans

**Committed – Connecting – Creative**

*Towards 125 years of service to the region  
1902 – 2027 and beyond*

**The love of Christ urges us on  
(2 Cor 5:14)**



# Synod 2026

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