



P4-5
Croajingolong
farewells the
Bentons



P11
2026
Gippsland
Camino



P17
Open doors,
open hearts

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Lent 2026

Gippsland Grammar recently gathered for a special Ash Wednesday service in their Chapel of St Anne at Garnsey, marking the beginning of Lent with honesty, reflection and hope.

The ashes used were prepared at St Paul's Cathedral,

Sale, from palm leaves collected on last year's Palm Sunday; a meaningful reminder of the connection not only as a school community, but as part of the wider Anglican Diocese of Gippsland.

As staff and students of Gippsland Grammar entered the season of Lent, they acknowledged their humanity while remembering that renewal and new beginnings are always possible.



The Mysteries of March



The feast of the Annunciation – also known as ‘Lady Day’, short for ‘Our Lady’s Day’, in honour of Blessed Mary – almost always falls in Lent. Mary’s mothering of Jesus is celebrated by Christians around the world on 25 March, exactly nine months before Christmas.

There’s a sense in which the date on which we observe the Annunciation is arbitrary, because the date of Christmas is also arbitrary: we don’t know exactly when Jesus was born. There’s something very helpful, however, about the fact that we typically keep it in Lent.

As twentieth-century Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote, ‘To say Incarnation is to say Cross’ (as quoted by John Saward in *The Mysteries of March*). That is, for one born of a woman, to say birth is also to say death, even when that one is ‘of the Father’s heart begotten’ (Gal 4:4).

I remember studying Christology in my undergraduate theology degree and being set the essay topic ‘Why did Jesus die?’ The short version of my 2000-word response was that he died because he lived; more specifically, that he died *as* he had lived: proclaiming that kingdom of radical inclusion until the end, until he was silenced (or so they thought) by those for whom this good news was not welcome news.

This eternal Word of God, who was incarnate of the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary and became truly human – as we say Sunday by Sunday in the Nicene Creed – was, for our sake, crucified under Pontius Pilate – as the very next line of the creed declaims.

That is not to say that Jesus was born ‘to’ die (any more than we are born *to* die), as though the Cross is the only purpose or sole and saving grace of the Incarnation. Yet to say one is to say the other, and because of the way he died – and lived

– we know ourselves loved to the end: from cradle, to grave, and beyond.

Indeed, we can go one step further in pondering the connection between 25 March and 25 December, which is much more than a biologically fixed gestation period separating two pins on the calendar.

There’s an old tradition that a prophet dies on the same day they were born. Yaroslav Walker (in the online journal *Seen & Unseen*) finds this ‘chronological symbol of sanctity’ reflected in the church’s commemoration of martyrs on the day of their death, rather than on their birthday. That the feast of the Incarnation falls on 25 March may be an application of this same tradition to Jesus, whose crucifixion was linked to this date from early times.

To say Incarnation is to say Cross

Although no less arbitrary than the date of Christmas – the Annunciation perhaps being connected with the spring equinox as Christmas has been linked to the summer solstice – the point is more about where we start. Rather than counting back nine months from Christmas to Lady Day, perhaps we do better to count forward nine months from this feast of the Incarnation to the Nativity.

If, in the theological imagination of the ancients, Jesus both took flesh and departed that flesh on the same day some 30 years apart, what is being said about the life lived in between? Surely that this is a life we must attend to, a person we can follow, whose living and dying are such an integrated whole that our wholeness too can be found in its pattern.

As the culmination of Jesus’ life and ministry – the place from where he reigns – the Cross is a kind of closing epiphany to mirror the opening epiphany of the magi: the revealing of who Jesus is, the authority of his teaching, and what his life means. It is the inevitable and essential outworking of *how* he lived: a life poured out for others – for us – come what may; and it did.

The Cross is also, of course (especially in John’s Passion narrative), the place where Jesus’ household is born, from where blood and water flow, as he breathes out his spirit and gives the beloved disciple and his mother to one another in kinship. What is accomplished in that moment – ‘it is finished’ – is nothing less than the work of *new* creation: a breathing and speaking into being of a new reality by this Word of the One who first ‘finished’ breathing and speaking creation into being (Gen 1:2 and 2:1).

What looks to all the world like death is actually a birthing. To say Incarnation is to say Cross. The two are inseparable. As Yaroslav Walker puts it:

In the economy of salvation they are one and the same ... In Christ our own conception, birth, and death are remade and recast, so that our true birth in baptism becomes our sharing in His death and resurrection.

No wonder there were movements in the early and medieval church to collocate their observance on the calendar. And, to this day, the coincidence of Lady Day with Lent is both instructive, and an invitation to deeper devotion and discipleship as we participate in the ‘mysteries of March’.



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



Dr Kevin Cameron OAM at the St Paul's Australia Day festivities

Dr Kevin Cameron awarded OAM

During the recent Australia Day honours Dr Kevin Cameron was 'surprised to be honoured with an Order of Australia (OAM)'. We congratulate Kevin on his award and thank him for his passion and dedication to the Arts and to teaching – gifts and skills generously applied to his ministry in the Anglican Church.

Dr Cameron is a Lay Canon at St Paul's Cathedral and is the Director of Music at Gippsland Grammar.

In response to messages of affirmation received Kevin posted:

First, I give glory, praise and honour to the Lord, who has always walked beside me in life but especially so in some dark valleys over the past two years.

It's nice to have some time by His grace on the mountaintop to enjoy a different view! Thank you to my colleagues and students over so many years that have worked with me to make some beautiful projects and memorable experiences and to my family and friends who have also been pilgrims on the journey with me ...

So few people were recognised today for contributions to music, arts, and primary/secondary education. I counted only seven across Australia for Music. We need to do more to build each other up, acknowledge innovative work, recognise sustained contribution – and *nominate*.

New Primate calls Australian Anglicans to a Season of Prayer

Bishop Mark Short has used the occasion of his Inauguration as Primate to open a Season of Prayer for the Anglican Church of Australia. Dr Short, Bishop of the Canberra Goulburn Diocese, was formally commissioned for the role he commenced on 1 November last year at a Service of Prayer and Thanksgiving held in St Saviour's Cathedral Goulburn on Saturday 14 February. Former Primate and Archbishop of Melbourne, Philip Freier, officiated at the service which was attended by bishops, clergy, and laity from around the Province.

Preaching on Mark's second miraculous feeding story (Mark 8:1-10), Dr Short said:

Jesus expresses compassion for the hungry crowd and invites the disciples to draw on what they have previously learned. Yet again, they miss the moment: "How can one feed these people in the desert?" Despite having witnessed Jesus feed an even larger group, they cannot imagine how such a need could be met. So, Jesus once more takes what little they have, gives thanks, and multiplies it. Everyone eats and is satisfied. This dynamic mirrors our own experience. When we look at the needs around us – homelessness, social isolation, fear for the future, and a deep spiritual hunger in our nation – we may feel the same sinking sense of inadequacy. How can one person, one parish, one church possibly meet such vast needs? The answer lies not in



the size of our resources but in the character of the One who receives them.

We face real challenges: raising new leaders, sustaining and reshaping ministry, and discerning God's will with humility and courage. Yet these challenges sit within a greater truth – Christ is still at work, still giving gifts, still building His Church. Stories of renewed spiritual interest, fruitful ministries, and surprising encounters with God are reminders that Jesus continues to multiply what we place in His hands. So the question comes to us: How many loaves do we have? Whatever we bring – our time, gifts, prayers, and faith – Jesus can use to meet the needs of many through the resources of a few.

After prayers for him and his wife, Dr Monica Short, Bp Mark addressed those gathered in person and online: 'Sisters and brothers, today we begin a year of prayer for the Anglican Church of Australia. In a time of change, challenge, and possibility, we turn again to the One who is faithful.

Let us commit ourselves to a season of listening, interceding, and seeking the renewing breath of the Spirit.'

The newly elected and inaugurated Primate will preside over General Synod for the first time later this year, with GS19 due to meet in Melbourne, 9–14 August, and the prayer for members of General Synod from *A Prayer Book for Australia* (p.213) was printed on bookmarks in the order of service, along with space to add prayer points for our nation, diocese, witness, and service. Bishop Mark also led those present in a prayer for the Australian church, including the petition: 'renew our hearts, rekindle our imagination, and restore our trust in your promises.'

The service included the commissioning of The Rev'd Dr Guerin Tueno as Primatial Assistant – a role provided by the General Synod to support the Primate in his or her role.

Bp Richard attended the service to represent the Diocese of Gippsland at this significant occasion in the life of our national Province within the wider Anglican Communion of Churches. +Richard commends the season of prayer to all Gippsland Anglicans and our parishes and ministry centres and joins the Primate in inviting bold intercession for our Church's unity and witness, healing, and courage to follow Christ. Please join him in praying also for +Mark in his new ministry as Primate.

Croajingolong farewells the Bentons

■ Jude Benton

Hey Jude, we're feeling sad,
You've made our lives here,
So much better.
Remember, you'll always
be in our hearts –
As you go on, to make a new start.

Hey Jude, you're not afraid,
You have courage,
and you have wisdom,
You've steered us through
dark and stormy days,
With grace and humour –
And very quirky ways ...

So sang a packed lunch gathering of community members, congregation, Op Shop team, returned holiday makers, parish partners, the partnering Seventh Day Adventist Congregation in Cann River and friends that made up the crowd for Rev'd Jude and Andy's farewell from the Cooperating Parish of Croajingolong.

The formal farewell began with a full-house church service at St Peter's Mallacoota. Bishop Richard, Rev'd Vic Haywood (UCA), representatives from Bush Church Aid, as well as Rev'd Ken Spackman each spoke about Jude's ministry in Croajingolong – leading to both tears and laughter from the congregation as both good times, and hard times were reflected upon. Over the previous four Sundays Jude had been leading the congregation through a handover series, based on Philippians, and seeing how the advice from Paul to a congregation he loved and was separated from, could speak to the



congregation that Jude loves and was about to be separated from. The final sermon was delivered as a letter in the form of Philippians, 'To God's Holy people in Croajingolong,' and reminding them to walk in unity and love, with an attitude of prayer and rejoicing as they continue to proclaim the gospel.

Following the service everyone moved to the community clubrooms, where local band 'Far Out' was already playing, the Lions club were cooking a BBQ, and the tables were laden with everyone's offering for the potluck lunch. Poetry, grace, speeches thanking both Jude and Andy and their roles in the community, a children's book, cake cutting, and the communal singing of *Hey Jude* wove around the lunch.

Although the congregation of St Peter's is small, and tidal in number as it fluctuates throughout the year, the festivities showed the true engagement of the Parish of Croajingolong. Throughout the day it is estimated that around 250 people drifted in, which is about one quarter of Mallacoota's population. As people gathered, laughed, cried, and shared memories and reflections together, the impact that Jude and Andy have made on the town over the last eight years was made clear – but so too was the impact that living and loving in this town and region has made on Jude and Andy, and their future ministries.

The final words Jude shared to conclude the day were from Philippians 4:4-9,

Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: Rejoice!

Let your gentleness be evident to all.
The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Rev'd Jude Benton was the Priest-in-Charge of Croajingolong and is now moving to the Diocese of Adelaide to the position of Ministry Discernment and Development Coordinator.



Rev'd Jude and Canon Aunty Phyllis Andy

With gratitude – farewell to Jude and Andy

■ Bec Hayman

My fondest memories of times spent with Jude are sharing a bunk room at the Abbey when we were gathered there for clergy conference. In a very 'school camp' kind of way, I remember lying in our beds chatting before going to sleep.

I once asked Jude what a typical work day looked like for her and she said, 'I walk to the supermarket and that takes me two hours.' I don't remember what else she said because I was so taken with that as a model of ministry – being grounded in the community and allowing time for the incidental chats and the unexpected ministry opportunities. And Jude being Jude, I can imagine many people would want to stop and chat and any walk to the supermarket would take at least two hours.

■ Steve Millard

I have had a good working relationship with Jude over her time as priest here. She doesn't have a lazy bone in her body and has always done good work in this community, ministering to the older members. Jude has built quite a following with her radio program every Wednesday, this has certainly been a first for the local priest! Jude has many and varied skills and has a very learned approach to the Bible and the sermons she preaches each Sunday.



Some excerpts from Rev'd Ken Spackman's speech to Jude:

Jude, over your time with us at St John's and St Peter's, you have preached with clarity, depth, and heart. Your sermons never talked at us; they invited us in. You helped us hear Scripture as something living and active, something that still speaks – often more gently, and more challengingly, than we expected.

You also reminded us that theology doesn't only belong in heavy books. It belongs in storybooks, in rhymes and riddles, in Dr Suess, and – quite memorably – in chocolate. Somehow you managed to translate the mysteries of God into things we could taste, hold, and both laugh and cry about. That gift will remain with us, as will the many variations on the Advent themes and candles which

might take us a few years to work out of our system! Your ability to preach through liturgy from first word to last is something that sets you apart and in my experience is a rare gift indeed.

But above all, Jude, you have loved your people well. With warmth, attentiveness, and genuine care, you have walked alongside us, your flock – in joy and grief, certainty and doubt, in traumatic times and in better times – never rushed, never [well mostly never] distracted, always present. You have shown us what pastoral ministry looks like when it is grounded in kindness and faithfulness.

Our loss is Adelaide's gain and we send you with deep gratitude and affection – knowing that wherever you go, God will already be there ... probably with a storybook, and possibly with chocolate.

Bishop Richard offered these words at Jude's farewell:

If workshopping an ideal appointment for Croajingolong eight years ago, one might have sought a youthful, energetic, creative priest with great community engagement skills; oh, and should their partner happen to work in fisheries and be a pilot with their own plane, that would be a bonus! In Jude and Andy, Holy Spirit delivered just what we needed in the Diocese and in the Parish for the challenges and opportunities that the last seven or eight years have brought.

And it would be easy to focus on Jude's exemplary pastoral leadership during and after the 2019/20 fires, and throughout COVID; or on her radio show and TV documentary appearances – presenting such a relatable and sensible voice of the church. Yet, in addition to these crunch moments and crucible seasons in her time here, we give thanks today for her stickability and fruitful faithfulness in and through the 'blessed ordinary', as this Parish's longest serving Incumbent.

One of my mantras (inspired partly by something Jude once said to me) is 'give permission and get out of the way.' This is made very easy by local leaders who show initiative while remaining accountable; who have the courage to take risks, and a good theology of failure; who love their people and have a clear sense of their own strengths and limitations; who are prayerful, and reflective, and nurture a teachable spirit, open to what God has yet to show us.

These are qualities she will help instil in those in discernment and the early years of ordained ministry, which is why her 'yes' to a new calling in Adelaide is godly and timely, much and all as we will miss her; though Andy assures me it's only a short flight back to Gippsland!

Amidst the many things that we're grateful for, Jude and Andy, we thank you most of all for being who you are, and we praise God for the gift of your presence among us. Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord!



Bishop Richard farewells Jude



Growing together – a new season at Warragul

L-R: Clairra Clarke, James McCann and Emily Davenport

■ **Carol Monson**

On the first Sunday in February school is back for most school students, and Warragul Anglican Church went back to the two regular services on Sunday. At the 9:45am service the church was packed with a congregation of all ages, many having come to witness the excitement of children attending school for the first time.

It has become a wonderful tradition at Warragul to have the school starters come to church in their new school uniforms and graduate from the SALT Club group for pre-schoolers into 'Fireflies'. This year each school beginner received a special gift bag from Children's Outreach Coordinator, Stacey Kearney, who had filled the bags with a special early reader and lots of fun stationery. Deepthy Blanchard, who led the 'Sparkies'

team for this cohort, prayed for the children who were about to begin their big adventure into school.

The excitement for these children did not end in the main church but continued downstairs in the SALT Club rooms where Stacey had a table spread with every kind of flower imaginable so that children could see some of God's amazing creations through large magnifying glasses. This was part of a trial for feedback of a short children's curriculum called 'Growing Hope' by A Rocha Australia on creation care and theology. What a lovely way to begin their journey of school and Bible study.

Meanwhile, upstairs in the adult church service Daniel Gebert began a new sermon series titled, 'To the Ends of the Earth' on the book of Acts starting

with Acts 1:1-14. This begins the story of the Holy Spirit empowering God's people to continue Jesus' gospel mission throughout the world, with a focus on what that means for us today.

Closer to home than the 'ends of the earth,' we have our annual camp, the WAC Weekend, at the end of February at Cowes Phillip Island where people will spend extended time together to think about the church's vision for the next five years with studies from Ephesians. It will be an opportunity to think about God's purposes from before the creation of the world and reflect on what we are called to do in the present time in our local community.

Carol Monson is the TGA representative at Warragul.

Stitches, stories and cuppas at St Paul's Sale

■ **Jenny Wilson**

When my husband and I moved to Sale in January 2024 with our daughter, son in law (who is an Anglican priest and chaplain in the Air Force) and granddaughter, I could not find a patchwork/craft group that met weekly. I had previously been the coordinator of a craft group at St Marks, Boyne Island in Queensland for 10 years. I had no thought of ever doing that again but felt the call and spoke to Keren the Dean about starting a craft group at St Paul's.

In October 2024, myself and one other met to stitch and knit. The two of us continued to meet weekly, all the while advertising for others to join us. During 2025 others joined us to knit beanies for seafarers, to have a cuppa and a chat and to cross stitch, sew and crochet.

By the end of 2025 we have grown to six regulars and three semi-regulars.



Handmade pieces by the craft group at St Paul's Cathedral, Sale

A lot of laughing, problem solving, creating and drinking cuppas happens each Thursday at St Paul's Cathedral in Sale.

You will find us in the meeting room from 10am – 1pm

If you think this might interest you, please contact me or just drop in on a

Thursday. My number is 0457 455 503.

I look forward to seeing you during 2026.

Jenny Wilson is the coordinator of the St Paul's craft group.

End of an era for The Easterlies Exploring Faith Matters group



The Easterlies Exploring Faith Matters group, Rev'd Kathy Dalton was unable to be present.

■ Jenny and Tony Wicking

Over the past four and a half years a small group of clergy and Lay Readers have been involved in Exploring Faith Matters (EfM). It is a four-year course that seeks to provide a structure that draws people deeper into their faith so that they are better equipped for ministry. Some may remember it as Education for Ministry. Reverends Jenny and Tony Wicking have mentored the group.

Over this time, we have learnt about the Old and New Testaments, church history and growing in maturity and ethics. We have been challenged in our understandings of the faith, as well as our perceptions and viewpoints as we reflected theologically and discussed the text which was the basis of each week's lesson. These were held by Zoom every week, as participants came from a diverse number of parishes, from Bairnsdale through to Mirboo North. We met face to face every six weeks.

We ended the course in November 2025 with two days face to face at Allansfield, Rhyll. We reviewed our time together and what we had achieved over the four years. Bp Richard was able to join us to present participants with their certificates of completion.

All participants agreed that the course had been challenging and life changing. As part of the reflections, we decided that we would re-form under the new name of 'The Galileans'. The aim of the group is to continue exploring our faith through discussion of a set text each month; rather like a book club. It will begin in May. We will find books that will continue to

challenge and provoke us with the aim of deepening our faith and our call to ministry. The group is open to others who may want to join.

Below are prayers offered by two participants as they reflected on our past four years:

Loving God by Val Jones

After four years, and with a myriad of emotions, we turn our boat back towards the shore.

When we've set our sails for a known course, you have swirled us around in eddies. You have sent tempests, blackened the sun, made the sea boil, unleashed jagged rocks, filled the sky with lightning and sent leviathans to thwart us.

At different times each of us has fallen overboard, only to be rescued by the sure hand of a fellow traveller.

You have beguiled us, given us warm summer breezes and star-filled nights. We have been lulled back into old ways, only to face another fork in the road, another challenge.

You have given us laughter and tears, torment and enlightenment, famine and refreshment. You held our hand then cast us off.

You gave us books and articles to read, the voices of different speakers and exercises that stretched our hearts and minds. At times we wondered if you were toying with us or teaching us.

We ponder where this journey has taken us and who we have become.

The sea is calm now as we slip the boat through the waves and up on to the sand. We disembark to dip our feet into the cool water and be baptised anew. We carry sand on our wet feet into the warmth of sun-drenched sand.

We are back.

T S Eliot tells us that:

This is everything:

To return to the place where we began
And know it anew.

We are changed. We can never be again who we were, and that is somehow reassuring.

We no longer see black and white in the world around us.

We are able to listen and be still and we are kinder to ourselves.

Your greatest gift to us has been each other, for we have been each other's guide and teacher.

Between certainty and wonder by Denise Martin

I sit in the quiet and hold my faith before God – the faith I have known, shaped by Christ's love and light. Yet I sense God's Spirit moving beyond my borders, whispering in languages and lives not my own.

I do not need to let go of Jesus to listen deeply. His presence teaches me to love without fear. In others' prayers, I glimpse the same longing, the same reaching toward the Holy.

Lord, keep me rooted in truth and open to mystery. Let my conviction be humble, my curiosity compassionate, and my faith wide enough to see You everywhere your light is at work. Amen.

The receipt of funding from the Betty and Michael Phillips fund enabled our EfM group to spend the completion of the four-year course and presentation of graduation certificates to our ten participants with two nights at Allansfield, Rhyll. (see page 18 for more information on this bequest). This gave us the opportunity to spend more time together and to focus on sharing with each other what we had learnt and how we had grown spiritually throughout the four years together. The sharing of our journeys over the four years was honest and encouraging.

Rev'ds Jenny and Tony Wicking are *Exploring Faith Matters* mentors.



Sam, Lucy and Lou Underhill sharing a recent catch from a diving trip at Phillip Island

■ Libby Willems

For the second consecutive year, the congregation of St James' Church, Jindivick hosted a Parish picnic on Aboriginal Sunday. The twenty-or-so people gathered filled the little timber church nicely and the conversations afterwards flowed warmly under the shady oak.

The sermon at Jindivick was a slight adaptation of Safina Stewart and Adam Gowen's message inspired by the very economic, single-verse first reading (Joshua 1:9)

I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

In their message, the legacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian leaders is held up as a beacon for all Christians to take action towards justice and reconciliation.

You can view this on YouTube Common Grace (2026, 14 January). Aboriginal Sunday 2026 Message - Be Strong and Courageous. www.youtube.com/watch?v=flu5trQ42pl

Among the named examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian leaders was Yorta Yorta man William Cooper. At a time when his own citizen rights did not exist and Aboriginal people everywhere were suffering greatly under racist policies, William Cooper led the

world's only protest in 1938 to meet with a high-ranking official of Germany's Third Reich who was in Melbourne. The written petition noted 'the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi Government of Germany' and asked, 'that this persecution be brought to an end.' Sadly, we know what happened next.

Aboriginal Sunday is no new concept. With its origins in 1938 as a Day of Mourning on 26 January (on the 150th anniversary of the planting of the British flag on Australian soil), it found its place on the Sunday preceding 26 January, when Australian Churches were asked to lead Christians to act in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples and the injustices being experienced. Our congregation was prompted to think about how we stand in solidarity with Aboriginal people. An example used to highlight just one injustice is the criminal age of responsibility. In many parts of Australia, it remains at ten years old and affects a disproportionate number of Aboriginal children*. The ACT is the only place that has raised the age to 14 years. In other places, including Victoria, it remains at 12 years.

It is fair to say that celebrating Aboriginal Sunday at Drouin Parish is by no means unifying, but certainly not divisive. There are some who choose not to participate. There are others who value the opportunity to reflect and share ideas on

this particular aspect of being Australian and working for justice for Aboriginal people. It is good that there is a place in the calendar to nurture this aspect of spiritual growth for those who seek it.

Some participating Drouin parishioners shared their views on what Aboriginal Sunday meant to them. Some responses exposed the discomfort of identifying injustice and the difficulty of righting past wrongs.

Christine Maxfield said, 'I was really interested to find out about Common Grace's work raising awareness and leading action on justice for Aboriginal people. Working together with other churches sounds like the way forward.'

Wendy Shiels commented that her household 'would like to see the date of Australia Day changed from 26 January. Whilst acknowledging the work of so many amazing people in our community being recognised and humbly receiving awards (as in my own family in the past), we are very respectful of the feelings of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'

Kirsten Merrall said, 'As a member of the St James congregation, it is wonderful to host this picnic at St James Jindivick on Jackson's Track. This district has an unbroken connection to Country for the Aboriginal community.'

Phillippa Glaister observed that: 'Aboriginal Sunday raises awareness and understanding of issues that continue to cause harm to First Nations individuals and our society as a whole.'

Melissa Mason noticed that her deeper understanding was helped along by the connections she has with other like-minded people who share their knowledge and voice their perspectives.

Another commenter – who wishes to remain anonymous – spoke about the discomfort of churches existing and operating on lands that were never ceded.

One thing is for sure, participating in Aboriginal Sunday tills the soil of change and spiritual growth for individuals and the Parish. It creates a place to explore difficult topics and grow a community for action.

* Of the 845 young people in detention on an average night aged 10 and over in the June quarter 2024, 3 in 5 (60%, or 509) were First Nations young people. Of the 722 young people aged 10–17 in detention during this period, about two in three (65%, or 471) were First Nations young people, yet First Nations young people made up just 6.6% of the Australian population aged 10–17.' Australian Institute of Health and Welfare website, accessed 26 January 2026.

References:

- www.commongrace.org.au/william_cooper
- www.commongrace.org.au/aboriginal_sunday_2026

Libby Willems is the TGA representative at Drouin.



On Sunday 1 February members of the congregation gathered after the service to celebrate Fr Giles Motisi's birthday, and before doing so Julia, his wife, piped up and said it was also her birthday! This was a pleasant surprise to realise they shared their birthdays, making our time twice as joyful. A delicious birthday cake was presented to Fr Giles and Julia by Marizel Gatica-Charles (centre) and Russel Savage (right)

■ Jeff Richardson

Some time ago the Parish of Moe/Newborough was gifted a property at 7 Anzac Street Moe (next door to the Moe Police Station) and it is now known as The Madge Vinnell Centre. It is the hive of many activities focused on connecting with the community, especially meeting the needs of people living in Moe who are seeking various kinds of support: material and food aid, and a cuppa or two in a relaxed and caring environment.

Out of the 'Cuppa Ministry' sprang the intentional outreach ministry of 'listening' and so 'The Listening Post' came into being. Jan Misiurka, one of the founding volunteers, reflected 'that there were many lonely people within our community and it could be used as a place where people could come and be accepted and listened to, but not an advice/referral centre – hence the name The Listening Post.'

As 'The Listening Post' evolved it became apparent that people coming for a cuppa required more than good listeners, they were also in need of support, encouragement, friendship and acceptance, and so it became 'The Listening Post Drop-in Centre'.

Of course, for people seeking a volunteer to talk to privately one is always available, but generally people come to

experience sitting and chatting together, often over a meal, while enjoying each other's company.

Jan said, 'We have supported people through grief, pointed people in the direction of receiving new appliances, watched the homeless get a roof over their heads, helped feed the hungry and celebrated achievements. We have seen folk gain confidence, seen changes in their view of the world and have seen faces light up when you recognise them and speak to them in the supermarket'.

This form of outreach ministry has been very manageable for The Parish of Moe/Newborough by providing a welcoming space with our welcoming group of volunteers who are 'listeners', wanting to hear people's stories. This in time makes connections that lead to

Christlike experiences and the goodness of God's Love.

In his letter to James, Paul instructs the people of the early church 'let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger'. (1:19b)

Canon Emeritus Jeff Richardson is the TGA Representative at Moe/Newborough.

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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
For more info contact daniel@warragul Anglican.org.au



Lay Canons Dr Iain Nicolson and Christine Morris OAM served alongside Nancy Schmack, with free cookbooks and Australian books also on offer

■ Christine Morris

St Paul's Cathedral joined the Australia Day celebrations in Victoria Park, opposite the Cathedral, alongside the citizenship ceremony welcoming 35 new Australians.

The St Paul's team shared 288 lamingtons (with optional jam and cream), Vegemite sandwiches and Australian Shapes with a very appreciative crowd. Thanks to Aldi's community grant, \$50 worth of lamingtons were generously donated.

Christine Morris is a Lay Canon and TGA representative at Sale.

Twice Blest for Australia Day 2026

Twice Blest Op Shop Volunteers received the Heyfield Community Group of the Year award at the Heyfield Australia Day celebration. Excerpt from the ceremony citation is below.

Twice Blest is staffed entirely by volunteers and has been part of the Heyfield landscape for over 20 years. Apart from helping support residential Christian ministry for the area, the Op Shop has a wider focus in supporting the local community, the Gippsland area and contributing to overseas aid.

The work behind the scenes is carried out by a group of dedicated volunteers who meet weekly to sort through the mountains of donations received from the public. Clothes, kitchenware, tableware, sporting goods, books, vinyl records, CDs, DVDs, the list goes on and on. All these goods are carefully checked to make sure it is clean and in working order before going on sale.

Over the time they have been operating Twice Blest have developed the following guidelines.

- Provide good quality clothing and goods at low prices to help those who are doing it tough.
- Open our shop to people who have suffered misfortune and help them get back on their feet.
- Provide food hampers to Heyfield Primary School for families that are doing it tough. In 2025, about 20 hampers were provided, with a range of pantry staples, fresh food, and some special treats, depending on the season.

Following natural disasters in Vanuatu and the Philippines, Twice Blest has been working with the Uniting Church to send practical aid to these countries.

This includes suitable clothing, kitchen and diningware, robust toys, some books, and working sewing machines.

Some of the behind-the-scenes processing that happens to get items ready for sale includes:

- Checking electrical equipment to make sure it is clean and is working and where appropriate, getting it tested and tagged by a qualified electrician.
- Sorting clothing, checking to make sure it is clean and all the zips work and the buttons and fasteners are in place. Washing clothing and airing bedding prior to sale if needed.
- Checking DVDs to weed out pirated copies and making sure that audio tapes and vinyl records are in reasonable condition.
- Checking wool and other yarn to make sure it is suitable for use and rewinding into new balls where necessary.
- Sorting books to make sure they are readable.
- Preparing unsalable cotton clothing and cotton blend tee shirts for use as rags.

As with all Op Shops there is a certain amount of unsalable material 'dropped off' and the Twice Blest staff work hard to reduce the amount that goes into landfill by separating out recyclable items and disposing of them at the appropriate Transfer Station.



Deb Chambers (current Op Shop Coordinator) receiving the award

Twice Blest also work with several other groups:

- The Uniting Church to provide overseas aid as already mentioned.
- Heyfield Lions Club for handling of furniture.
- Fossick and Find Op Shop in Morwell who provide a collection service for the excess stock.

Since moving from the shop in Temple Street to the Parish Centre adjacent to the church, Twice Blest has become a 'gathering hub' for those who need a quiet space, a chat or a cuppa.

There are about ten volunteers who run the shop from Monday to Friday and Saturday mornings. Additionally, another ten volunteers turn up on Wednesday mornings to sort through and process the mountains of incoming material.

The current Op Shop Coordinator is Deb Chambers, who took over from Margaret Beckett a few years ago.

2026 Gippsland Camino

17–19 April 2026

www.railtrails.org.au

Over the centuries people have used walking as a way of integrating their mind, heart, body and soul. Sometimes the walk is short and with a destination in mind. Sometimes the walk is more of a wander or a meander. But it seems that the practice of walking offers people an opportunity to be aware of their bodies and their thoughts at the same time, and when this happens, we see health and wellness improve in both. A Camino Walk is a deliberate and intentional practice of integrating spiritual practice into a walk that challenges you physically.

The nature of the Camino

Camino is a Spanish word that means 'I walk' and when described as El Camino, it means *The Way*. Traditionally a Camino is undertaken as a spiritual pilgrimage, the most famous being the Camino de Santiago, or Way of St James, which is a network of pilgrimage routes that end in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. It's Europe's oldest and most well-known pilgrimage route.

Why do a Camino?

These walks provide a unique combination of physical challenge, stunning scenery, and a sense of community with fellow pilgrims. They are a profound opportunity for personal reflection and spiritual growth, intentionally designed to disconnect you from daily life and reconnect with yourself and nature while experiencing a sense of accomplishment by completing the journey. The pilgrim's way is a form of reintegration of your mind, heart, body, and soul.

2026 Gippsland Great Southern Rail Trail Camino

We will be coordinating a three-day supported walk for participants from the 17th – 19th April 2026. In 2025, we

followed the Gippsland Plains Rail Trail, however, this time we will be following the route of the Great Southern Rail Trail.

Commencing from Nyora and concluding in Meenyan we will cover 52 kilometres. By utilising a popular walking route and combining it with the enthusiastic participation of the local churches, we are offering a unique experience to connect back into yourself.

The walk will commence on **Day 1** at Nyora and conclude at Korumburra (23km).

Day 2 will be from Korumburra to Leongatha (14.8km).

Day 3 will be from Leongatha to Meenyan (16 km).

The supported walk occurs over a longer weekend, starting with a blessing of the Pilgrims on Thursday evening at Nyora and then concluding with a celebration at Meenyan on the Sunday afternoon. Pilgrims will be responsible for their own food and accommodation, but the nature of the support is that participants will be walking with others; have access to volunteer support along the way; and have the opportunities to visit, rest and reflect in local churches.

Pilgrims are welcome to register for the whole or any part of the walk. While the walk is not arduous, they are long day walks, and we encourage people to start training for the walk now.

You can register here: <https://events.humanitix.com/gippsland-camino-2026>

The 2026 Gippsland Camino Information Booklet can be used as a resource on its own. The nature of a pilgrimage is that people may choose to do this at your own time and own pace. While the local churches may not be open when you choose to do your own Camino, the information about local amenities and prayer resources will be an invaluable resource for any person using the route as a pilgrim.

Volunteers needed – Would you like to be involved?

If you are part of a church community near to this trail, we would love you to support our pilgrims. From opening up the church over the weekend, providing a community breakfast, volunteer support along the trail, First Aid support, etc, we would be glad of your help.

For more information, a copy of the Booklet, or to volunteer your help, please contact Sharron Lane on 0423 575 949.



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Student leaders step into 2026 with confidence and compassion



Elizabeth Schembri (St Paul's Traralgon Secondary School Deputy School Captain), Zainab Alhijaji and Tharuja Vidanapathirana (St Paul's Traralgon Secondary School Captains), with Leonie Clark (Head of St Paul's Traralgon Secondary School)



Tracey King (Head of St Paul's Traralgon Junior School); Grace Wilk and Emmett Hughes (St Paul's Traralgon Junior School Leaders); and Gordon Oldham (St Paul's Deputy Principal)



Deb Cameron (Head of St Paul's Warragul Secondary School); Addison Tucker and Asmi Pathania (School Captains); Vidhaurshanaa Rajadurai Sharmila and Max May (Deputy School Captains); and Gordon Oldham (St Paul's Deputy Principal)



Melissa McCrae (Head of St Paul's Warragul Junior School); Thomas McKerrow and Layla McMahon (St Paul's Warragul Junior School Captains); and Gordon Oldham (St Paul's Deputy Principal)

Across the school, St Paul's Anglican Grammar School officially welcomed its student leadership team for 2026, marking the beginning of a year focused on service, responsibility and example-setting.

At the Warragul Campus, School Captains Asmi Pathania and Addison Tucker were formally inducted alongside Deputy School Captains Vidhaurshanaa Rajadurai Sharmila and Max May, and the Warragul Junior School Captains, Thomas McKerrow and Layla McMahon.

Traralgon Secondary School Captains, Zainab Alhijaji and Tharuja Vidanapathirana, were formally inducted alongside the campus' inaugural Deputy School Captain, Elizabeth Schembri, and Traralgon Junior School Captains, Emmett Hughes and Grace Wilk.

Leadership at St Paul's offers students the opportunity to grow alongside their peers, fostering a shared sense of purpose and teamwork. By leading and learning together, student leaders help strengthen the school community while encouraging all students to uphold the school's values.

During their speeches, leaders empowered students to make the most of every opportunity. School Captains, Addison and Asmi said, 'Starting the new year, our main message for you is to embrace new, different opportunities with open arms and make the most of every experience you have. We encourage everyone to be the best version of themselves and to have as much fun as possible in the process.'

Tharuja talked about what makes the school special. 'Our school is not only defined by its achievements but the relationships we build and the support we give one another', he praised.

Zainab spoke about their leadership focus. 'We want every student to feel empowered to get involved, take chances and support one another, both inside and outside the classroom,' she shared. 'Every contribution matters, and every student has something valuable to offer.'

Grace and Emmett also offered words of support. 'Let's remember to be kind, help each other, and make our school a happy and safe place for everyone. We can't wait to learn, play and grow together this year!', they said.

Zainab and Tharuja are part of the first Year 11 cohort at the Traralgon Campus and will undertake their VCE studies at the St Paul's Traralgon Campus together with the VCE Foundation cohort, as the campus progresses towards welcoming Year 12 in 2027.



From nervous kinder student to international rower Lily's inspiring school story

Young trumpeter Lily has no idea that one day she will perform the *Last Post* internationally as part of Gippsland Grammar's ANZAC Music and Languages Tour in 2023

When Gippsland Grammar Year 12 student Lily looks back on her first days at school, one memory still shines: the Early Learning Centre's traditional Easter Hat Parade. 'I remember feeling so excited as we made our hats and walked out in front of the 'big kids'; the now 17-year-old says. It was the beginning of a school journey that would carry Lily from a nervous three-year old to a confident young woman balancing academic excellence, elite sport, music, and leadership.

Lily's teachers now describe her as a dedicated, humble and quietly determined student – qualities strengthened across her years at the school, from embracing early traditions to representing Gippsland Grammar on the world rowing stage.

Some traditions stay with you. For Lily, it was also the Buddies Program. First, she looked up to her 'big buddy' who guided her; later she proudly stepped into that role herself. 'I still keep in contact with my little buddy, Emily, who is not so little anymore,' she laughs. 'Watching her grow from a shy Kindy kid to a Year 6 student is honestly amazing.'

As the years went on, Lily's courage grew. After singing simple Japanese greetings in her earliest ELC language lessons, she found herself on the school's Japan Exchange in Year 9, living with a host family and attending Gippsland Grammar's sister school. 'That trip made me realise how much I'd grown, from singing 'hello' in Kindy to confidently navigating Japan 10 years later.'

Her teachers noticed that growth, too. Mentor Teacher Nathan Wallace describes Lily as a student who 'balances a busy cocurricular program with academic pursuits,' congratulating her for her Year 11 achievements, which included completing a University of Southern Queensland Biomolecular Sciences unit.



Lily at the University of Southern Queensland residential school as part of her Biomolecular Science unit

Music has also shaped Lily's school years. She began violin in Junior School, joined the choir, then picked up the trumpet and played alongside older senior school students in the Dulcie Holland Concert Band. She fondly remembers performing in the Junior School Jazz Band, a formative experience that eventually led to playing the *Last Post* at war memorials across Europe during the inaugural ANZAC Music and Languages Tour in 2023. From Year 4 to Year 12, she has also been involved in six school musicals.

And then there is rowing – something she first tried as a curious Year 7 student. She could never have predicted that the sport would take her so far: state team representation, national medals and competing at the Henley Royal Regatta in the UK, where her quad finished in the top eight internationally.

One moment stands above the rest. 'If I could relive one school moment for ten seconds,' she says, 'it would be standing on the podium at the Head of School Girls rowing regatta, proudly wearing my blazer and a gold medal over my zootie (rowing uniform). I never imagined this was possible.'

Now, as she embarks on Year 12, her goals are as determined as they are inspiring: a gold medal at the Head of School Girls and continuing to excel academically in her final year.

Looking back at her Foundation photo, Lily doesn't see nerves, but pride. Pride in everything she has embraced, everything she has achieved, and everything still ahead.

From her first Easter Hat Parade to international rowing, Lily's Gippsland Grammar journey is a story of talent, determination and community – and a young person who 'got braver' and keeps saying 'yes' to opportunity. It's exactly what she hopes for every young person starting at her School or considering a similar journey.

As a Gippsland Grammar Sport Captain and Music Captain, Lily invites everyone to visit her school 'to see what it is all about for themselves'.

Upcoming Open Days will provide that opportunity:

- 28 February 9–11am at St Anne's Junior Campus, Raymond St, Sale
- 28 February 11:30am–1.30pm at Garnsey Campus, Princes Highway, Sale
- 28 March 9–11am at Bairnsdale Campus

For more information visit gippslandgrammar.au or contact the Gippsland Grammar Enrolments Team on 5143 6388.

GIPPSLAND MOTHERS' UNION UPDATE



■ Lindy Driver

There is much happening across the Gippsland Mothers' Union, particularly through our involvement in the Red Bench Project. We are encouraging churches and local shires to install red benches in church grounds, parks, or other prominent public spaces. Once painted red, we work with the Red Rose Foundation to organise a plaque for each bench, bearing the

message 'Let's Change the Ending – Stop Domestic Violence' (or similar wording). While the plaques may vary slightly, the message remains the same.

To date, Paynesville has installed two red benches outside their church, and Bairnsdale will soon have three within their church grounds. Once the plaques are in place, these visible symbols will

continue to raise awareness in our communities.

Sadly, gender-based violence has again increased over the past year, and alarmingly, financial abuse of the elderly in Gippsland has also risen sharply.

Lady Day will be celebrated at the Cathedral on Wednesday 25 March, during the 10:00 am service. This will be a special occasion as we give thanks for the remarkable ministry of Thelma Langshaw, recognising her many years of service as Mothers' Union Chaplain, and also celebrate the commissioning of Dean Spalding as our new MU Chaplain. This service is open to all members of the Diocese – women and men alike – as Mothers' Union continues to be inclusive and welcoming.

This year also marks a significant milestone, with Mothers' Union celebrating 150 years. It is hoped that I, along with many other Diocesan Presidents, will travel to Durban, South Africa, for a worldwide conference and celebration in late September and early October. Diocesan celebrations are also planned locally later in the year, with further details to be confirmed.

For more information about the Red Bench Project and the Red Rose Foundation visit: www.redrosefoundation.com.au/

Lindy Driver is the Mothers' Union President for the Diocese of Gippsland.

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The Abbey March 2026

■ Cath Connelly

Today is stunning. It's nine o'clock in the morning and I'm sitting outside on a newly-renovated bench here at The Abbey. The temperature today will be about 23 degrees. There are a couple of clouds in the sky and a gentle breeze will keep the heat away.

Five pelicans have just flown over whilst six kangaroos linger on the paddock before heading to the cool of the trees to sit out the day. The lake has a few waves on it, stirred up since the glass-like calmness of earlier this morning. No surprise at the beautiful day after last night's magnificent sunset setting the sky ablaze with reds and yellows.

The thing is, I just want to share this place with you. My heart's desire is that you find the opportunity to come down here to The Abbey and experience for yourself the sheer, utter beauty of this place.

Bring a picnic and come for the day, book a motel room and stay for a week. Plan a family holiday and book our three-bedroom cottage. Or book one of our retreat rooms for your personal time away.

We have such an extensive range of programs on offer that we hope there's something for you. In every way, in all that we do here, our thoughts are always towards making this a place where you will feel welcome, where your soul can be rejuvenated and where you can spend time in the sacredness of God's creation.

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

MARCH

- 12 *Hush Quiet Day*
Using collage to tell our hidden story
Facilitator: Jenny Wicking
- 15 Josh Layne harp concert 3:30pm
- 17 Chat and Chew 12:30pm
come and share a simple lunch together
- 23 – 26 Midweek Retreat: Life as a Journey
Facilitator: Dr Merryl Blair

APRIL

- 9 *Hush Quiet Day*
Ethos, Pathos and Logos: Three Lenses
for Meaningful Communication
Facilitator: Kevin Broughton
- 21 Chat and Chew 12:30pm
come and share a simple lunch together

MAY

- 8 – 10 Weekend retreat *St Gobnair and her place of Resurrection*
Facilitators: Cath Connelly and Alison Powell
- 14 *Hush Quiet Day*
The fourth, the fifth, a minor fall, the major lift:
The search for the cord of three
Facilitator: Rev'd Dennis Webster
- 16 Cooking Class with Jackie – Learning the Art of Cooking a Luxurious Meal
Chef: Jackie O'Connell
- 19 Chat and Chew 12:30pm
come and share a simple lunch together
- 23 Cooking Class With Jackie – Learning the Art of Preparing a Basic Roast Meal
Chef: Jackie O'Connell

All events and accommodation can be booked online or phone us on (03) 5156 6580.
www.theabbey.org.au

Beyond the podium

© IOC/Quinton Meyer

■ Krista Mountford

Christine Morris recently sent me an excerpt from the Winter Olympic Games Opening Ceremony speech by IOC President Kirsty Coventry and remarked that it would make a good sermon, and I agree!

Though spoken in the context of elite sport, Coventry's words reach far beyond competition, touching on what it means to be human – to dream, to overcome, to show courage, empathy and heart. Her reflections remind us that strength is not only measured by winning, but by how we respond to setbacks, how we treat one another, and how we find the courage to rise again when we fall.

Particularly striking is Coventry's reference to *ubuntu* – 'I am because we are' – a reminder that our lives are shaped by connection and community. While few of us will ever compete on an Olympic stage, the values celebrated in these Games are lived out daily in families, churches and communities, where courage, kindness and respect quietly reflect the best of our shared humanity.

Below is an excerpt from the speech but you can read it in full at: <http://bit.ly/4cJUGk>

Over the next two weeks, you're going to give us something truly special. You'll show us what it means to be human. To dream. To overcome. To respect one another. To care for each other. You'll show us that strength isn't just about winning – it's about courage, empathy and heart.

You will not only make incredible memories. You will reach your Olympic dreams – and you will show the world how to live.

This is why we all love the Olympic Games. Because through you, we see the very best of ourselves. You remind us that we can be brave. That we can be kind. And that we can get back up, no matter how hard we fall.

And to everyone watching, here in Italy and around the world – thank you for joining this moment. Thank you for believing in the magic of the Olympic Games.

When we see an athlete stumble and find the strength to rise, we are reminded that we can do the same.

When we see rivals embrace at the end of a finish line, we are reminded that we can choose respect.

When we see grace, courage and friendship – we remember the kind of people we all want to be.

The spirit of the Olympic Games is about so much more than sport. It is about us – and what makes us human.

In Africa, where I'm from, we have a word: *ubuntu*. It means: I am because we are. That we can only rise by lifting others. That our strength comes from caring for each other.

No matter where you come from, we all know this spirit – it lives and breathes in every community.

I see this spirit most clearly at the Olympic Games. Where athletes from every corner of our world compete fiercely – but also respect, support and inspire one another. They remind us that we are all connected, that our strength comes from how we treat each other, and that the best of humanity is found in courage, compassion and kindness.

So let these Games be a celebration of what unites us – of everything that makes us human.

This is the magic of the Olympic Games: inspiring us all to be the best that we can be – together.

Let your flame spark hope, let it ignite joy and light the way for all of us.

Krista Mountford is the TGA Editor and Diocesan Development Officer.



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Open doors, open hearts

A growing story of community at the Warragul Mosque

■ Baw Baw Islamic Network Australia Inc. (BINAI)

Earlier this year, the doors of the Warragul Mosque once again opened wide to the community for our second annual Mosque Open Day – and what unfolded was a beautiful reminder of what is possible when people come together with open hearts.

On Saturday 7 February, we welcomed over 150 visitors throughout the day, including families, neighbours, and people of many different faiths and backgrounds. The atmosphere was warm, respectful, and genuinely uplifting. Conversations flowed easily, questions were asked with curiosity, and friendships began as people shared stories and learned together.

Visitors were invited to explore the mosque freely, engage with informative displays addressing common myths and facts about Islam, and participate in a range of activities including henna and face painting, Arabic calligraphy, try on a Hijab, and cultural food stalls. Guests were offered dates of various kinds and Zamzam water – both holding deep spiritual significance in Islam – and many took the opportunity to observe the live call to prayer and the congregational Dhuhr prayer, gaining insight into Muslim daily worship.

A dedicated question-and-answer stall was staffed by volunteers with backgrounds in comparative religion, allowing visitors to engage in thoughtful discussions about faith, values, and shared humanity. What stood out most, however, was not any single activity – it was the sense of connection. People lingered, chatted, laughed, and took time to genuinely get to know one another.

Since we last shared an update with readers of *TGA*, much has been happening within our mosque community.

We have continued to strengthen interfaith relationships, including meaningful gatherings with staff and students from various Catholic colleges across the region, fostering respectful dialogue and mutual understanding between young people of different faith traditions.

We have also launched a Sunday school program, where local Muslim children are learning how to read the Qur'an while being nurtured in values of kindness, respect, and community responsibility. It has been heartening to see young families becoming more connected to the mosque, creating a space where faith, learning, and belonging grow hand in hand.

As Ramadan approaches, our community prepares for a sacred period dedicated to reflection, generosity, and spiritual growth. During this month, Muslims observe fasting during daylight hours and gather in the evenings for extended night prayers and community connection, which often continue late into the night due to the long summer days. It is a deeply meaningful time focused on compassion, gratitude, and strengthening bonds with both faith and neighbours.

A visitor to the Warragul Mosque Open Day receiving a henna design

Although our Open Day is held annually, our mosque is open 365 days a year. Anyone is welcome to visit at any time – to ask questions, learn, or simply experience the space. We believe strongly that places of worship should also be places of welcome.

At BINAI, our work is guided by a simple belief: when people meet face-to-face, barriers fall away. Whether through school visits, interfaith gatherings, children's programs, or community open days, each interaction becomes a small but powerful step toward understanding.

We are deeply grateful to everyone who attended, volunteered, and supported our recent Open Day, and to our neighbours and friends across Gippsland who continue to walk alongside us. This is what community looks like – and we feel this is only the beginning.

For more information visit: www.binai.org.au

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A gift of pace, time and belonging

L-R: Monica, Sonya and Nakuya

■ **Krista Mountford**

The Betty and Michael Phillips Bequest was established from the estate of Betty and Michael Phillips, a devoted Anglican couple from the Yarram parish who carried a long-held vision for Christian hospitality and retreat in Gippsland.

Although they did not live to see that vision realised themselves, their generosity continues to offer others the gift of time and space away from the demands of everyday life. The bequest provides grants to individuals and groups to support participation in spiritual retreats, creating opportunities for rest, recovery, prayer and deeper attentiveness to God.

The Bequest continues to bear quiet but profound fruit in the lives of those who receive it. One such recipient is Rose La Vie, whose time supported by the Bequest opened up space for reflection, rest and renewed attentiveness to God's presence. Like many who have benefited from this gift, Rose speaks of how rare and

precious it is to be given time – unhurried, uninterrupted – to listen deeply, to pray, and to notice what is stirring within.

This same generosity also made possible participation in the Art from the Heart retreat, led by Andrea Do Santos, held at The Abbey in early December 2025. Through the Bequest, two women – Monica McDonald and Nayuka Hood – were supported to attend alongside Rose, creating a shared experience of creativity, spirituality and connection.

Monica and Nayuka both have direct Gunaikurnai connections to Raymond Island. For Monica, this connection comes through her father Troy's mother, Beryl, who Rose met at the Treaty celebrations. Remarkably, just a month before the retreat – and following the prayers of the Rev'd Canon Phyllis Andy – Monica, who had never visited Raymond Island before, began dreaming about reconnecting with this part of her Aboriginal heritage, alongside a longing for time away with her new baby.

The Abbey's generosity extended well beyond the retreat itself. They were able to stay together in a welcoming three-bedroom cottage, and Monica's mother, Sonya, was also supported to come along to assist with child minding. This allowed Monica

to fully participate in the retreat while also tending to her five-month-old daughter, Kirae-Beryl, and her nine-year-old son, Orcah. Sonya would then take Kirae-Beryl for walks around the island with Orcah, creating space for both care and rest.

Orcah, in particular, seemed to connect instantly with Country. Before long, he was confidently guiding Abbey visitors to the places where blue-tongued lizards, koalas and native birds could be found. His ease, curiosity and sense of belonging were deeply moving – a reminder that connection to land can be both ancient and immediate.

The Abbey also ensured that Nayuka's partner, Nathan – a First Peoples man from elsewhere – was accommodated in a separate unit. This enabled him to support Nayuka and Orcah through 'men's business', ensuring that cultural, spiritual and family needs were held with care.

Stories like these reveal the deeper impact of the Betty and Michael Phillips Bequest. Beyond funding retreats or accommodation, it offers something far more enduring: the gift of reflective space and time with God, held within a community that understands hospitality, culture and the sacredness of place. At The Abbey, this generosity becomes embodied – nurturing healing, creativity, reconnection and hope, often in ways that could never be planned, only received with gratitude.

Krista Mountford is the TGA Editor and Diocesan Development Officer.



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One word poorly translated can totally change the ending

■ **Bec Hayman**

The Apostle Paul is surprisingly detailed and clear in his description of the end times. Unfortunately, for most of us Western Christians, our latent Platonic worldview leaves us completely confused. As children of Platonic philosophy, we fall into dualism like ducks into water. Things are spiritual or physical, heavenly or earthly, supernatural or natural, either/or, never both/and. Scratch below the surface of this either/or dualism and you'll tend to find the belief that the spiritual is eternal and the physical is passing away.

This belief system leaves us with a strangely muddled theology of creation. In blunt terms, if it is all going to be destroyed anyway, why bother caring for the environment?

But Paul begins and ends with both/and. As a Jew in Jesus' time, he has a more wholistic worldview that integrates rather than separates the spiritual and the physical. Ultimate reality therefore and indeed the goal of the Kingdom of God is to fully integrate Heaven and Earth.

The Gospel, the Good News, is not principally about my personal salvation. Or yours. Rather, it is the deeply political proclamation that Jesus is Lord of Heaven and Earth. Both/and. Jesus reigns in Heaven and one day he is coming to reign on Earth as in Heaven.

So, what is this poorly translated word? 1 Thessalonians 4:17 has, in most English translations, words to the effect that we will be caught up and will meet Jesus in the air.

This is the NRSV's rendition:

Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them [those who have already died] to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord for ever.

This so fits our latent Platonic worldview that we do not bother to look at the text more closely. It appears to say exactly what we believe: We are getting whisked out of here. At the end of all time, Jesus is coming to get us and take us to Heaven, hallelujah! The Earth doesn't really matter because it *is* matter. The physical will pass away.

But the word translated as 'meet' is so much more than the English suggests. It is a technical word which we do not have in English and it means to go out and meet the new Lord in order to welcome him into the city to take up his rulership. This is the definition from Biblehub: 'The word



A splash of creation celebration outside the Melbourne Town Hall

translated "meeting" (ἀπάντησις) is found only three times in the Greek New Testament. In each setting it describes a purposeful going-out to greet an arriving person of importance, emphasizing welcome, honor, and accompaniment. Though the contexts differ – parable, travel narrative, and eschatological teaching – the common thread is the joyful reception of a long-expected figure and the immediate escorting of that figure to the intended destination.'

If we are here on Earth when Jesus returns, we are not being whisked anywhere. We are instead lining the streets to welcome

the King back here. Our role is to get the place in order before he comes.

For further reading: Tom Wright's *Surprised by Hope*

The Rev'd Bec Hayman is the Anglican Priest at the Cooperating Churches of Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar.



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Survivor, comfort and the way of Jesus

■ Daniel Lowe

How well do you think you would go as a competitor in *Survivor*? This is a question that occasionally gets floated at the dinner table in our house. I tap out early, knowing my tendency to cease functioning without a plentiful food supply, but other members of the family rather fancy their chances. Being a competitor in a show like *Survivor* is an interesting thing to put your hand up for. Sure, there is the allure of a cash prize if you happen to make it to the end. But is that one-in-twenty-four chance enough to warrant days of rough living, minimal food, and grueling physical and mental challenges?

There is a strange disconnect between the appeal of volunteering to endure these hardships and our commitment to maximizing our own comfort in life. It is almost as if we recognize the character-building benefits of these challenges, and we are happy to experience them vicariously through reality TV, but any actual personal discomfort is to be avoided at all costs. Our instinct in the face of uncertainty has been to seek comfort and familiarity. But are we in danger of taking this too far? Has our desire for comfort become damaging?

Author and speaker Skye Jethani quotes world-renowned orthopaedic specialist and leprosy surgeon Dr. Paul Brand in this reflection on the idol of comfort: 'Dr. Paul Brand wrote a book about his work with lepers called, *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants*. He said:

I thank God for pain, I cannot think of a greater gift I could give to my leprosy patients. Most people view pain as an enemy ... Yet, without it, heart attacks, strokes, ruptured appendixes, and stomach ulcers would all occur without any warning. Who would ever visit a doctor apart from pain's warnings?' Dr. Brand not only wrote about the potential gift of pain but also the great danger of endless comfort. We assume that being comfortable is necessary in order to experience happiness, joy, and pleasure. That is why our culture almost universally celebrates comfort as an undeniable good. Dr. Brand, however, rejects this cultural belief and diagnoses the true nature of the idol of comfort. 'Properly understood,' he said, 'comfort is not feeling good, but feeling nothing at all.' The sort of comfort pursued by our consumer culture isn't merely the soothing of pain. Rather, it is the numbing of feelings altogether. Comfort is the semi-vegetative state we enter when scrolling on our phones or when ingesting yet another video fed to us by YouTube's algorithm. In this way, the idol of comfort doesn't just insulate us from pain, struggle, and suffering, but also from true joy, gratitude, and any awareness of the sanctifying presence of God as well.'

I must confess that I have felt the attraction of that numbing comfort myself at times. It feels safe and asks little of us. I can appreciate why so many, especially young people, are drawn to it. The sight of my own children, headphones in ears,

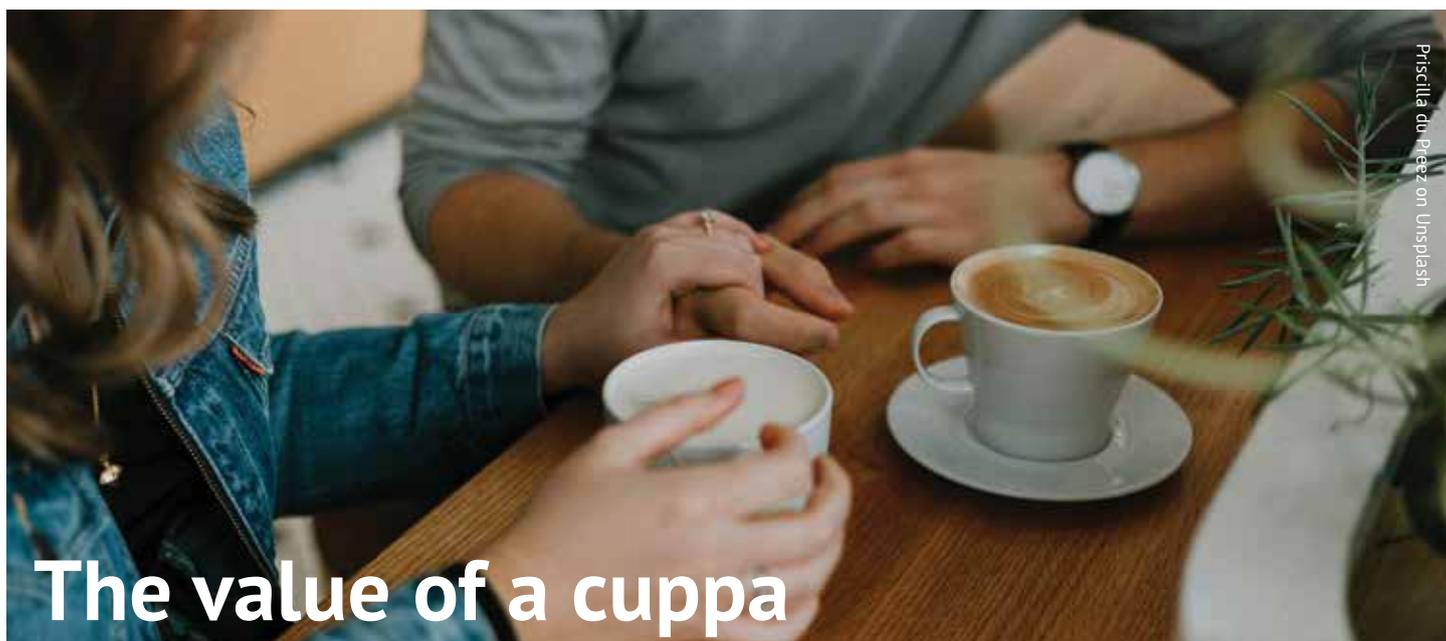
staring vacantly at a screen or into the middle distance can simultaneously infuriate me and make me a little jealous. Wouldn't it be nice to just switch off from the world like that? Except that I know it is not actually helpful in the long run. Not only does it not equip us to deal with the inevitable challenges of life, but it also denies us the joys and thrills as well. A life seeking comfort is not a life lived to the fullest.

It should be no surprise then that the same Jesus who said, 'I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest' (John 10:10) called his followers with a pitch that sounds more like the sign-up for *Survivor*. 'Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."' (Matthew 16:24). 'I have told you this, so that you might have peace in your hearts because of me. While you are in the world, you will have to suffer.' (John 16:33)

Whether we are exploring Jesus' invitation to follow Him or simply trying to get the most out of life for ourselves and our children, there is something to be said for embracing discomfort. It may hurt a bit, but it may also open the door to new joys and delights.

May you experience life to the fullest, with all its joys and heartaches. Now if I could just get my kids to take their headphones out of their ears...

Canon Daniel Lowe is an Associate Director at ISCAST.



Priscilla du Preez on Unsplash

The value of a cuppa

■ Linda Bowden

Who doesn't love a cuppa? It may be tea, but more likely these days, coffee. Perhaps hot chocolate, chai, lemon grass and ginger, earl grey?

Our supermarket shelves burst with varieties; our cafes need multiple blackboards, one for coffee varieties alone.

We love them. But why, I wonder?

Is it the creamy froth, crisp tang or robust flavours? Or is it friendship, fellowship, or opportunity for time out?

I think it's the latter. The value of shared conversations cannot be overestimated. Somehow, it's easier to share problems or joys with a cuppa in hand. Sharing our time with others over a cuppa has value beyond the caffeine hit. It's a way of really connecting and of seeing people in a way that we often don't have time for in church. We are not rushing anywhere, but taking the time to sit, relax, listen, and share.

Conversations are varied, sometimes

very personal, sometimes political or biblical. At times we leave the coffee shop feeling uplifted and free of a burden. Sometimes we leave with prayer requests.

Always we leave having shared our time. We must value these times of connection, and in our busy world, cherish the time to sit and relax.

May God bless our baristas, café managers and workers.

Linda Bowden is a parishioner at Yarram.

Letter to the editor

■ Jan Down

I am sad and concerned about the closing down of *The Melbourne Anglican*. I might have been writing this letter to the editor of *TMA*, but that is no longer possible.

Where does high-quality journalism, conversation, and debate continue? That is my concern. Social media cannot replace what might be called 'slow journalism' – professional, well-researched, deeply considered and expertly written. Not something composed in an instant.

The official statement sent to Melbourne clergy from Matthew Crichton, Interim Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne, noted:

Over the past three decades, *The Melbourne Anglican* has developed a strong reputation for independent, fair-minded journalism and for the breadth and quality of its reporting on social, ethical and spiritual issues.

Indeed, *TMA* became for a time – especially after Roland Ashby became

editor – essential reading not just for Melbourne Anglicans, but for many around the country.

The statement from Melbourne explains the termination of the paper as due to financial pressures. It adds:

Looking ahead, future communications from the Diocese will be shared through the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne (ADOM) website and official social media channels.

That little word 'from' disturbs me, because it sounds like a one-way street. Where is the opportunity for dialogue? The statement says that

TMA's social media posts as well as its weekly digital newsletters, *Newsstand* and *Best of the Week*, will also cease being published.

This is quite extraordinary. These were highly valued services provided by Anglican Media.

Of the five dioceses in the Victorian Province, the Wangaratta and Bendigo Dioceses at least have online publications. Ballarat has an invitation on its website

to be included in an email list for a newsletter. Gippsland is the only diocese left in our province with a printed edition as well as online. It is quite a strange move for the central diocese of the province to cease production of any diocesan publication altogether.

Perhaps *The Gippsland Anglican* can help fill the gap left by *TMA*, and include news and perspectives from Melbourne, as well as picking up some of the world-wide Anglican Communion news? Then we might gain more subscribers from around the province.

On a personal note, I am deeply thankful for the time I had as *TGA* editor, working in the *TMA-TGA* partnership with Roland Ashby, Mark Brolly and Emma Halgren, a wonderful team with such intelligence, grace and humour. May many more such people have the opportunity to serve the Church in providing in-depth news, analysis and varied perspectives, for the building up of God's people and the flourishing of God's kingdom on Earth.

Jan Down is a former Editor of *TGA*, Chair of ACTinG and a *TGA* representative for the Parish of Sale.

From the Editor



Choosing gentleness this Lent

In a world that constantly asks us to be faster, busier and more certain, Ash Wednesday offers something different. It reminds us that it's okay to have limits. That we don't have to carry everything alone. That being human means being fragile at times, and that this is something we all share.

Across Gippsland, many of us know what it means to live close to the realities of weather, land, ageing bodies, loss, and change. Communities are shaped as much by what we endure together as by what we celebrate. Community is shaped as much by care and patience as by celebration.

The values at the heart of Ash Wednesday – reflection, humility and compassion – aren't confined to church life. They're lived out when neighbours check in, when we pause to really listen, and when we make space for people who are doing it tough. These moments may seem small, but they matter deeply.

As Lent begins, perhaps the invitation is to be gentle rather than demanding. To notice what gives life. To let go of what weighs us down. And to choose kindness, presence and connection – values that sit comfortably in the heart of our Gippsland communities.

We warmly invite contributions to *TGA*. Whether it's a story from your parish, reflections on community life, or thoughtful musings on faith and the world around us, we'd love to hear your voice. Please contact me at: editor@gippsanglican.org.au

Krista Mountford

Forest's final reply to Jeremiah

This dialogue has been engaging and thoughtful. If you would like to offer your own thoughts and musings, we would love to hear from you. Email Krista Mountford *TGA* Editor: editor@gippsanglican.org.au

Dear Jeremiah,

Your words touch me deeply.

I hear your heartfelt concern that in your time, in the twenty-first century, you may have left it too late to enable the survival of the human species. From my space in the twenty-fourth century, it means so much to know that our ancestors cared and that so many of you have done something to make it possible for your descendants to survive.

All I can urge is that you do what is yours to do. By this, I mean that rather than getting caught up in anger, despair or guilt, you open yourself up to stepping into actions that you can do. The rest is other people's work.

Thank you for doing your bit. Thank you for every action and prayer that you undertake. We are here and as I have said in our previous letters, this is in part because of the actions you undertook in the twenty-first century. Deep gratitude.

Yes, I likewise look forward to meeting you in eternity. In peace,

Forest

The ^{Gippsland} Anglican



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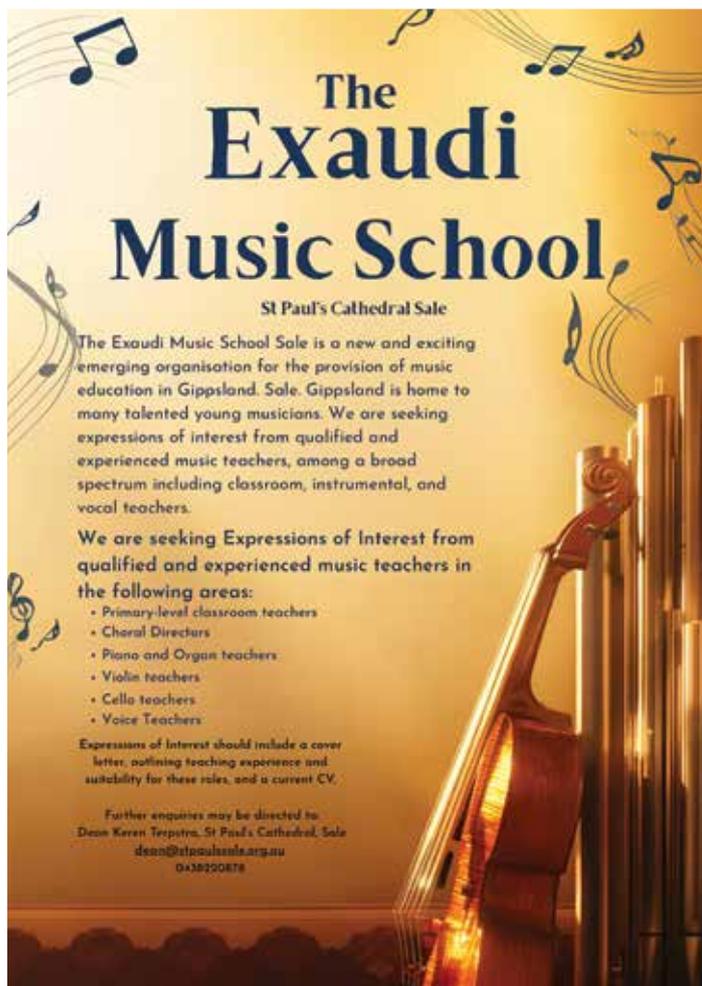


Ministry Opportunities, Sapphire Coast, NSW

The Sapphire Coast Anglican Parish is now inviting applications for two full time Clergy positions:

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- Associate Minister / Mission to Seafarers Chaplain

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for further information and our Parish Profile



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The Exaudi Music School Sale is a new and exciting emerging organisation for the provision of music education in Gippsland, Sale. Gippsland is home to many talented young musicians. We are seeking expressions of interest from qualified and experienced music teachers, among a broad spectrum including classroom, instrumental, and vocal teachers.

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Further enquiries may be directed to:
Dean Keren Terpstra, St Paul's Cathedral, Sale
dean@stpaulssale.org.au
0438220878



JOSH LAYNE

THE HARP HAS A STORY

MARCH.13 | 7:30PM

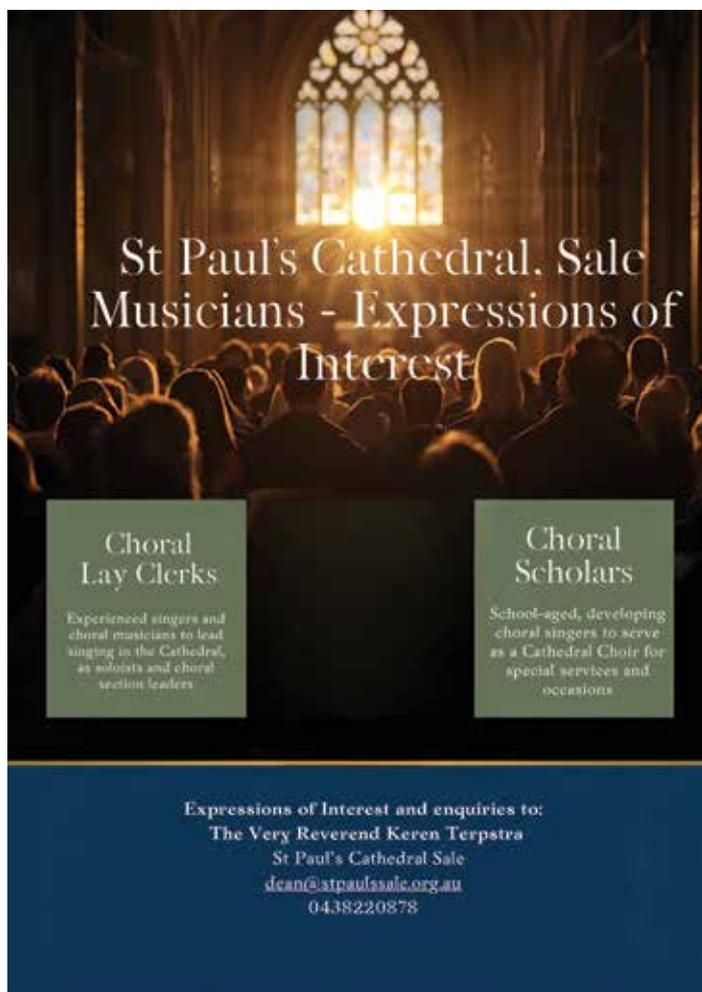
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St Paul's Cathedral Sale
dean@stpaulssale.org.au
0438220878

EVENTS

What's on at the Cathedral

Return to your Cathedral, a beating heart for God in Gippsland, for any of these wonderful events and services, and find refreshment and food for the journey of Lent and Holy Week.

Friday 13 March:	Josh Layne harp concert 7:30pm
Wednesday 25 March:	MU Lady Day service 10am
Palm Sunday 29 March:	Palm Sunday Liturgy of the Palms and Eucharist 9am
Tuesday 31 March:	Chrism Eucharist 11am



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

Lenten Poem

Ann Weems

Lent is a time to take time to let the power
of our faith story take hold of us,
a time to let the events get up
and walk around in us,
a time to intensify our living unto Christ,
a time to hover over the thoughts
of our hearts,
a time to place our feet in the streets of
Jerusalem or to walk along the sea and
listen to his Word,
a time to touch his robe
and feel the healing surge through us,
a time to ponder and a time to wonder...

Lent is a time to allow
a fresh new taste of God!
Perhaps we're afraid to have time to think,
for thoughts come unbidden.
Perhaps we're afraid to face our future
knowing our past.
Give us courage, O God,
to hear your Word
and to read our living into it.
Give us the trust to know we're forgiven
and give us the faith
to take up our lives and walk.

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The ^{Gippsland} Anglican

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