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Hope25
at
Warragul



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Lindy Driver
commissioned
as MU President



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Art and
Easter at
St Paul's

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Now the green blade rises



Celebrating Easter's 'new world order'



I am indebted to IASCUFO colleague and Chair, Bishop Graham Tomlin, for his insights relating to parallels between Emperor Constantine and our own geopolitical context. +Graham is the Director of the UK Centre for Cultural Wellness, and writes for the online forum 'Seen and Unseen', a phrase from the Nicene Creed.

Constantine the Great was a fourth-century Roman ruler who presided over the ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, 1700 years ago this year, from which emerged the Nicene Creed.

Chair of IASCUFO and my colleague on the Commission, Bp Graham Tomlin, has recently compared Constantine's regime to the so-called 'new world order' of our own time:

After years of polarised politics, nepotism from previous rulers and disputed claims to power, an unpredictable and egotistical leader believes that God had saved him to make the nation great again. He is acclaimed as the most powerful leader in the world and instantly surprises everyone by issuing a raft of disruptive new measures to radically change the way society functions and announces that he is going to target anti-Christian bias in society. Sounds familiar?

(Seen and Unseen, bit.ly/4ifXu3P)

Tomlin is in fact referring here to the rule of Constantine, the first Christian Emperor, and – as such – the person who ushered in over one thousand years of 'Christendom'; an epoch in which the Church was, more or less, at the centre of things.

Constantine rose to power by defeating Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge outside Rome. Prior to this battle, Constantine is said to have dreamed of a cross in the heavens trailing a banner that read 'conquer in this sign'. The Latin phrase *In hoc signo vinces* is etched into

my memory as (somewhat strangely) one of the stained glass windows of Trinity College Chapel features this imperial dream, and I have been pondering it, on and off, these last 43 years!

For Constantine, this 'talismán' was a spur to bring a kind of 'Star-Warsian' peace to the Empire – that is, a cessation of hostilities – by subduing his enemies within and without under the banner of Christianity.

Following the brutal Diocletian persecutions of the earlier part of that century, churches began to emerge from being underground and presumably subversive to being granted land by the state for new buildings. Paganism receded at the official religion, crucifixion was abolished, and Sunday became the principal weekly holy day.

Imputing motive is always fraught. On the one hand, contemporary church historian Eusebius wrote: 'in every city the victorious emperor published decrees full of humanity and laws that gave proof of munificence and true piety. All tyranny had been purged away' (as cited by Tomlin). On the other, Constantine was reputed to be capricious, cruel, and vain, modestly renaming Byzantium (the Empire's capital) 'Constantinople'.

Was he a disciple of Jesus, seeking the advancement of his Gospel? Or was his patronage of Christianity instrumental – getting ahead of the cultural curve, as it were – a means of currying favour and exercising control?

Ironically, as Tomlin notes, Constantine was precisely the sort of triumphalist, military saviour figure that Jesus' 'own' had been waiting for, and on account of the disappointment of those expectations he was turned over to Caesar.

Last month's TGA featured a cover story of the Premier's Reception for Church leaders; a good and worthy event in and of itself. The relationship between religion and politics – church and state – is always complex; at once unavoidable and fraught.

Because the Gospel speaks to the good ordering of our common life, there is no sense in which it can be 'a-political' (in a small 'p' way, as distinct from party political). The Gospel has to do with money, and health, and justice, and inclusion, and peace. Any proclamation of the Gospel which is unconcerned with such daily realities for God's people is abstract, at best.

At the same time, a church that claims to speak truth to power must not be so comfortable in the corridors of power and the circles of influence as to be in any way constrained or compromised in its advocacy for the most vulnerable in our communities.

1700 years on, we give thanks for the inspired genius of the Nicene Creed, which has united Christians in faith perhaps as much as any extra-scriptural text in that entire period.

As in some respects the engineer of the ecumenical council that produced it, Constantine also warrants credit for a credal statement around which the Church could be galvanised in the service of society and evangelism.

It's no accident, however, that the face of Christianity changed as a result of moving from the periphery to the hub; from the margins to the middle. The symbol of the cross, in which Constantine was to conquer, began to share the space of Christian iconography with the image of Christ as 'Pantokrator' – ruler of all.

This Eastertide, as we proclaim the hope we have in Christ in this uncertain world, we again find ourselves closer to the edges than the centre. May this properly 'eccentric', counter-cultural location keep us faithful to the Crucified and Risen one, in whose new world order the meek shall inherit the earth, the first shall be last, and only those who can receive it as little children will enter the kingdom.

+RM



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.



L to R: Archdeacon John Webster, Bishop Jeffrey Driver, Fr Giles Motisi, Archdeacon Emeritus Sue Jacka, Bishop Richard, The Rev'd David Perryman

■ The Rev'd Bruce Charles and Jan Misiurka

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome to the Motisi Family.

(Oro is the word for welcome in the Oro Province in Papua New Guinea where the family have come from.)

After several months of anticipation and expectation – then less than two weeks after receiving their visas, they arrived in Melbourne on 24 March 2025.

Amidst the hustle and bustle of ensuring they had their basic needs, they shivered their way (most of the time) to the evening of Wednesday the 9 April when the parish celebrated the Induction and Installation of Fr Giles Motisi as Priest in Charge of our Parish, a night where Dietrich Bonhoeffer was also remembered.

Joining our own parishioners were lay readers and clergy from across the Diocese, The Rev'd Moira Dodd (Uniting Church) representing ministers of other local church denominations, and local politicians Russell Broadbent – Federal MP, Martin Cameron – State Legislative Assembly, and Sharon Gibson – Latrobe City Council, all of whom gave speeches of welcome at the end of the service.

Bishop Richard presided over the service with assistance from the Registrar, the retiring Archdeacon Sue Jacka and the newly appointed Archdeacon, John Webster.

Bishop Jeffrey Driver, a past bishop of Gippsland and current missionary to PNG (where he serves as Acting Principal of the Modawa Institute where Fr Giles has served as Deputy Principal) presented Fr Giles to the Bishop. The Church Wardens welcomed him to the Parish as our Priest in Charge.

Bishop Jeffrey preached the sermon. He reminded us of the changing experience Fr Giles, Julia, Darol and Joana were undergoing in moving to a new place, with a different culture, different climate, away from family (having left their older two sons in PNG) and away from friends and known community. Yet while undergoing all this change, there was great opportunity for a new beginning.

Bishop Jeffrey continued to say how this was also the situation for the Church as a whole and the Parish of Moe–Newborough itself. The world is changing and therefore the church has to decide whether it wants to hang on to how things have always been or embrace the change and move with it.

In saying this he noted that there was a danger that on the one hand we fight against the change and want to stay where we feel comfortable, or swing the other way and try to adopt all of the latest trends at once. With this new ministry we have the opportunity to learn from each other and see what new possibilities might open and where God is leading us.

Appropriately, Lindy Driver read the first Reading. Lindy, who is Bishop Jeffrey's wife and Diocesan Mothers' Union President, has spent time with the Motisi Family in Papua New Guinea and has developed a warm friendship with them. Parish Council members were the other readers.

Central to the service is the presentation to the priest being inducted into the Parish with symbols that represent the foundations of a priest's and the Parish's Ministry. Our youngest and oldest active parishioners were among the symbol bearers presenting:

- A Bible – the centrality of our focus on the Word of God
- A prayer book – the worship and liturg of our faith tradition
- The water of Baptism – our common call to make disciples
- A stole – the ordination commission to serve in Jesus' name
- A Parish roll – a reminder of the importance of pastoral care in the parish
- A map (an ancient document for some!) of the Parish – a symbol of our ministry to all in the area
- Holy oil – the healing ministry
- The Eucharistic vessels – the centrality of holy Communion in our faith tradition

After being installed by Bishop Richard at the altar-table, Father Giles led the prayers, which were followed by the welcoming speeches, concluding with Lay Canon Jan Misiurka's welcome to the Parish and a presentation of flowers to Mother Julia and gift cards for Darol and Joana. Fr Giles concluded the service with his reply to the speeches.

As usual, food appeared from everywhere and a wonderful supper was shared by all.

Less than a month from the announcement of the Motisi family's arrival, Fr Giles was finally inducted as Priest in Charge of the Parish, and we look forward with hope and joy to his ministry, the next stage of ministry in this Parish.

Bishop Jeffrey concluded his homily with these challenges:

Tonight you begin a new journey together, with a world around you so changed, that it has become for the traditional church, almost foreign.

We live in a new land! Explore it together. Love it together. Share the depths of prayer and take the risks of love.

Be the Church. You are the salt for the earth. Be Salt. Be the Church!

With Bishop Jeffrey's exhortation resonating in our hearts and minds, the opportunity we have to learn from each other and see what new possibilities might open up makes for a time of wonder and discovery of where God may be leading us in the church and in the new world emerging around us!

Oro, Oro, Oro.

Good community turn-out for Holy Innocents Church

Holy Innocents Church in all its splendour

■ Melissa Thomson

A rainbow in the clouds was a beautiful reminder of God's love for humankind as locals and visitors gathered at Holy Innocents Church in Yinnar South for the first service there in 2025.

The service was held to commemorate both the church's namesake, the 'holy innocents' (the children two years and under massacred by King Herod in his attempt to execute the Baby Jesus), as well as to discuss the future of the historic church and its importance to the Yinnar South community, and to hear locals' thoughts on what they'd like done with the building.

The church was open prior to the service for people to come in and have a look around. In total, 24 people stayed for the service, an impressive level of attendance for a building described by the *Morwell Advertiser* in 1936 as 'having a seating capacity for approximately 25 people'.

The service, organised by The Rev'd Bec Hayman, was made simple. Church pews were placed along the walls so everyone could see one another. 'Amazing Grace' was sung. It was moving to think of all the congregations in the past who had sung that very song in this very church.

A bible reading from the Gospel of Matthew, telling of Jesus' birth and Herod's cruel acts, was read aloud. Instead of a sermon, attendees shared various thoughts on the reading, touching on hard questions like why suffering exists when God is good.

The Rev'd Bec Hayman finished the service with a prayer. Then, going around the circle, everyone introduced themselves and shared why they had come that morning.

Some shared that they had come for the church service and to worship God, some had come because of their interest in historical churches, some because they had heard the church was going to be moved and were against it, and three of the men said, 'Because my wife made me!'

After a break for morning tea, various ideas for the future of the church were discussed. There was strong community feeling that the church should stay in its current position on Middle Creek Road, and not be moved into Yinnar which had been an alternative idea put forth as an option to enable easier building maintenance.

The possibility of a mid-week Bible study was raised but only a couple of people were interested. However,

everyone was in agreement that they would like to have a service on the fifth Sunday during the months containing five Sundays, with most locals leaning towards relaxed informal services.

Visitors commented they felt welcomed there and would like to come again. Attendee Carol Iverach said it was good to see the place getting more use. 'Without people, a church is just an empty building.'

The church is fitted with a keypad access to make entry available as a place of prayer or quiet reflection for anyone at any time, though those wishing to do so should contact The Rev'd Bec Hayman to request the access code.

Melissa Thomson is a TGA correspondent for Churchill/Boolarra/Yinnar.



Room for 25 or maybe more!

Hope25 seeks to empower Australian Anglican parishes and communities in an intentional season of sharing hope in Jesus from Easter to Pentecost in 2025. See: www.hope25.com.au

■ Carol Monson

HOPE25

As part of Hope25's vision, Warragul Anglican Church is encouraging regular and targeted prayer in a range of forms.

The recent Warragul Parish Camp focused on the topic of 'Evangelism' which was followed by the regular encouragement of all congregational members to pray each day for three to five people. With persistence, it is hoped 300 lives will be changed.

Easter is a time for evangelistic services with topics to engage believers and non-believers alike. In order for this to happen, a mechanism is being developed to encourage people to ask questions about faith, belief, challenges, suffering and so much more.

Many churches provide a time for prayer outside the services. This has become a regular practise at 9:15am each Sunday in the Warragul Anglican Church before the second morning service. It is a quiet time and space where prayer is led by the rector Daniel Gebert, but others are also encouraged to lead.

However, to encourage people to view prayer as taking different forms, services during Easter have ranged through traditional choral forms with people learning the words and music for a sung Eucharist.

This service means the congregation sings parts of the communion service instead of saying them. Learning the music to a sung Eucharist builds on the practice of the church having instigated Evensong services when the congregation has time to listen to trained voices.

There are also wholly musical services in which everyone participates. It is worth



considering the difference in the way one reacts emotionally to music as opposed to the spoken word.

During school holidays, when there are no formal SALT Club activities, children have an opportunity before Communion to learn about and participate in prayer. They sit on the floor in front of the Communion Table with an adult who explains the prayers with simplified slides young readers can manage. It is a chance for

very young children to begin learning the Liturgical traditions of Communion and be an active part of the adult congregation even if they cannot read.

The importance of teaching the practice of prayer to young people is evidenced when they are happy to sit on a floor in the church building amongst others who are enjoying their morning tea. Prayer becomes a natural part of one's faith.

A servant of the Servant

Gippsland Anglicans saddened by the death of Pope Francis

■ An excerpt from +Richard's *Ad Clerum* on Easter Monday

Dear sisters and brothers in the Risen Christ,

Our Easter joy is tempered by news of the death of His Holiness, Pope Francis.

Pope Francis has been a humble and inspiring Christian leader, and a reforming Primate and Bishop of Rome, whose legacy will be significant and lasting.

Perhaps none more so than through

the ecumenical and global impact of his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, the formal repealing of the so-called 'Doctrine of Discovery' (via the relevant Dicasteries) in 2023, and the recent renewal of synodality in the Roman Catholic tradition.

Please join with me in praying for the repose of his soul, for those who carry the responsibility of electing and preparing for his successor, and for Roman Catholic clergy and laity the

world over, who will be grieving the death of this servant of the Servant.

The ultimate purpose of other creatures is not to be found in us. Rather, all creatures are moving forward with us and through us towards a common point of arrival, which is God, in that transcendent fullness where the risen Christ embraces and illumines all things.

Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*

Remembering Lay Reader George Cox; Always backing our firefighters



In front of St Mark's at Thorpdale, L-R: Cliff Jamieson, Paul Zelenewicz, Cpt Paul McClure, The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding, Cpt Mark Walsh, and Sally Walsh

A service was held at St Mark's Thorpdale on 30 March to celebrate the life of the Stipendiary Lay Reader, George Cox born in 1871 who resided in Thorpdale. Notably, George was also a firefighter, and co-ordinated the provision of aid to victims of the bushfires of 1898, for which he was commended by the Bishop of Melbourne, Field Flowers Goe, for his 'noble exertions in putting out the fires'.

The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding, Rector of Trafalgar Parish (Thorpdale, Trafalgar and Yarragon), observed that given George Cox's interest in the natural world and his all-too-close experience of bushfires, it was fitting that members of

the parish's three CFA brigades be invited to the special service, for the parish to run an auction of goods to raise money in acknowledgment and support of the local brigades.

Special thanks were given for those involved in the auction, including Mick Kirkham for the heavy lifting and set up, Ann Newman and Cliff Jamieson for transporting sound equipment and trestle tables, and Paul Zelenewicz for finalising the auction transactions.

Together with auction proceeds, book sales of *Remembering George Cox: A Man of Many Parts*, and donations, the event raised \$900 for the local brigades.

Missions – 'a backyard ministry'

■ Wendy Mawoyo

When Gospel Realt invited me to his church to be the main guest speaker to celebrate Missions Sunday, I was a little taken aback.

However, I saw an opportunity to share both my story and the community work I'm proud to do with Anglicare Victoria and the Diocese.

Meeting Gospel's family and the rest of the parishioners was such a warm welcome – exactly the spirit of Easter's message of love and hope in action.

A bit about myself. I grew up in a small town called Gweru, in Zimbabwe. I was the second of five children in a bustling home where my electrician dad was often at work.

My mum's huge heart kept our doors – and our hearts – open to neighbours and families in need. She filled our home with light, love and warmth. At first, I bristled at sharing what felt like 'our' resources. Over time, I learned that this 'backyard ministry' of compassion is where missions truly begin.

The way I was raised helped me to see and hear others irrespective of colour, gender, race and background. Everyone is worth fighting for.

We cannot be comfortable, but we can be intentional.

Today, as Anglicare's Parish Partnerships Coordinator, my idea of missions has

expanded. I see that same spirit flourishing within Anglicare and the parishes across Gippsland:

- Paynesville Parish is looking at partnering with the local primary school breakfast club to tackle child hunger and homelessness.
- Foster Parish connects through art and food, especially within the Filipino community.
- Drouin Parish is creating a safe play space where parents can gather and support one another.
- Lang Lang (Westernport) runs a thriving school breakfast club and is launching a much needed mothers' group.
- Churchill Cooperating Parish feeds university students and builds community on campus.

These projects remind me that missions aren't some far off endeavour – they start right in our own backyards.

This Easter season let's look around: who needs our presence, our words, or our practical help?



The Rev'd Bec Hayman (Churchill) with Wendy Mawoyo

Together, through Parish Partnership Grants and everyday acts of kindness, we bring hope HOPE25 to life.

Thank you, Anglicare Victoria and the Diocese, for making this work possible. Let's keep loving our communities and stepping into Easter with open hands and open hearts.

Happy Eastertide!



Polynesian style floral decoration of the chapel

Julie Bruce

World Day of Prayer Service 2025

Kia Orana!
May you live long!
May you live well!
May you shine like the sun!
May you dance with the waves!

It was the turn of the Moe-Newborough Anglican Church at St Aidan's on Friday

7 March to host the ecumenical 'World Day of Prayer' service.

It was indeed a privilege to welcome some 40 participants from local churches to join together with those around the world to pray for the Cook Islands.

The theme of the day was that of being 'fearfully and wonderfully made'.

The Cook Islands as a country is a series of 15 volcanic islands scattered over two million square kilometres of the Pacific Ocean. Only 12 of these islands are inhabited with a total population of 16,000. Many Cook Islanders live abroad in Australia and New Zealand. The capital is the

island of Rarotonga.

In 1821 the London Missionary Society brought the Christian Gospel to the Cook Islands, and although the LMS attempted to suppress the singing, dancing and drumming of the Cook Island inhabitants, the Islanders eventually found a way to integrate these practices with their Christian faith.

Today the Cook Islands is a majority Christian nation, where people are driven by a strong sense of community and cultural values that come from their belief in God.

Cook Islanders have a Polynesian connection. Before the day itself, we decorated St Aidan's as a tropical location with coconuts, flowers, beach towels on chairs, coloured lights and indoor plants, adding to the atmosphere. Our service leader donned a luxurious long dark wig encircled with flowers and a *muu muu* costume. On the day itself, leis (garlands) were presented to participants and so began the service.

Our guest speaker was Vi Seear. Vi grew up in Samoa and gave us an overview of the Polynesian lifestyle. She spoke of the values of the people, their trust in God, their faith and their culture. Women are the nurturers of tradition, mothers and daughters working together to make use of their God-given talents.

It is the responsibility of all the family to look after their elders as there are no nursing homes. Island life is not without its problems however. Political alliances are changing, women can still be oppressed and suppressed and gender-based violence is of a particular concern.

However, Vi spoke passionately about people's faith and trust in God and showed us God's love for the Polynesian people through the beautiful Cook Islanders' values and culture.

The service concluded with the hymn *The Day You Gave us Lord is Ended* composed by John Ellerton (1826-1893), sending us out with the theme of the day that 'God is with us, we are wonderfully made'.



Guest speaker and member of the parish, Vi Seear

Gippsland and Ballarat Dioceses unite in 2025 Bible Reading Challenge

A *Bible Reading Challenge* was first held in the Diocese of Ballarat in 2018.

Bishop Garry Weatherill had expressed concern about the number of parishioners who do not regularly read their bibles. Hence, the Ballarat Ministry Development Committee decided to issue a challenge to every person in the diocese to read their Bible every day of the month of June.

They were asked to spend around 10 minutes of each day reading a selected passage, with use of brief notes written by lay and clerical members of the diocese.

In 2024, Gippsland joined Ballarat in the challenge, and nominated two people to contribute to the notes – The Rev'd Dr Tim Gaden and The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding.

This year Bishop Richard and Mrs Elaine Wright, Lay Reader from the Parish of Yarram, have written notes for one week each, and Ballarat writers have contributed for the other two weeks. Instead of reading a specific book of the Bible, passages featuring women of the Bible will be the focus.

Materials for this year's Bible Reading Challenge will be distributed by Bishop Richard during May.

Engaging with our bodies in prayer

■ Cath Connelly

'We open ourselves to all that is:

We reach down to touch earth; we gather the energies of earth and bring them up through our bodies... to connect with the heavens. Here we reach for the energies of the heavens and bring them right back through our bodies reconnecting to earth.

Returning to our hearts we take a step back, reaching back for the wisdom of all that has been revealed – the wisdom the ancestors found, the wisdom we found yesterday.

Returning to our hearts we take a step forward to embrace whatever it is that will come our way this day.

We stand here, strongly grounded. We know we are blessed. We know we are loved. We know we belong. In the name of Christ, who is revealed in all. Amen.'

This spiritual practice that I devised several years ago is one amongst hundreds that invites us to engage with our whole bodies in prayer. So often, as we come before God, we remain caught in our cerebral words and thoughts. Through practices, such as the one above, we are invited to immerse ourselves in the fullness of honouring that we are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Around The Abbey, I see people engaged in embodied spiritual practices of their own making. One man speaks about traveling back and forward on the ride-on mower as his form of meditation. We have a husband and wife who together garden for an hour each morning, seeing this as their time of being present to all that is around. For years, a woman has tended the Memorial Garden, bending to weed as an act of love. Writing prayers and attaching them to the Prayer Tree is another way in which thoughts move into physical engagement.

Once we build our labyrinth, we will offer a time-honoured way for you to walk your prayers. We know we are blessed. We know we are loved. We know we belong.

Save the date



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

MAY

8 *Hush Day* – C.S. Lewis: The Figure of Aslan in the *Narnia Chronicles*. Facilitator: Jeff Berger

8 Celtic Music session. 6:45pm–9:45pm

JUNE

12 *Hush Day* – Pilgrimage. Facilitator: Cath Connelly

12 Celtic Music session. 6:45pm–9:45pm

20–22 *Moss!* Weekend retreat. Facilitator: Kelly Skilton

JULY

10 *Hush Day* – Three Celtic Saints: Cuthbert, Columba & Aidan. Facilitator: June Treadwell

10 Celtic Music session

11–13 Coming of Age: Stepping Boldly into Elderhood. Facilitator: Janet Munro

Emergency Food Relief Project at San Remo

■ Ruth Hanlon

Last October I was approached by two members of the San Remo community who were keen to offer help to those struggling with the rising costs of living by providing emergency food relief.

St Augustine's Church was seen as an ideal venue, being located in the main shopping strip of San Remo, already with a popular Op Shop.

The Parish Council agreed with local volunteers to auspice and support the project as a programme of the church. After clearing some cupboard space and receiving donations of non-perishable food, the doors of St Augustine were open for Emergency Food Relief on 26 March 2025.

The two community volunteers who were behind the idea, Jane Ross and Samiro Douglas, are pleased to partner with the church. We are trialling the project, one day a week for three months.

Parish Deacon Erena Norfolk, who

co-ordinates the food pantry at Phillip Island Community and Learning Centre (PICAL), had been thinking that there was a need for this service in San Remo.

Having emergency food relief in San Remo will save those locals having to travel often by bus to Cowes to collect food.

The project is being supported by the community with offers of supplies through businesses like the local St Remo IGA.

This project ties in with our Hope25 initiatives as a positive, practical outworking of hope to those in need. Our prayer is that if the programme is successful, we will develop relationships and have the opportunity to share the hope we have in Jesus and to minister spiritually, as well as provide practical support to those we meet through this programme.

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



L–R: Local volunteer Samiro Douglas, The Rev'd Erena Norfolk and The Rev'd Ruth Hanlon

Gippsland Grammar's rowers demand respect on national stage

L-R: April Harrison, Scarlett Tavasci, Tara Dihood, Lily Canfield and cox Lucy Hodges, medal winners at the Australian Rowing Championships

Gippsland Grammar's rowers returned from the Australian Rowing Championships in Tasmania in early April with two medal finishes and a new level of respect on the national stage.

Students April Harrison, Scarlett Tavasci, Tara Dihood, Lily Canfield and cox Lucy Hodges won gold in the schoolgirls quad sprint over 500m and a bronze in the schoolgirl quad over 2000m behind interstate contenders Northern Beaches Secondary (NSW) and Canberra Girls Grammar.

Director of Rowing Nick Bartlett said the two results, combined with an overall five A-final appearances and the performances of the boys' squad, was incredibly satisfying for the whole team.

'The bronze medal was a massive moment for our Rowing Program,' Mr Bartlett said. 'That particular race has a long history and strong prestige,

and our school hasn't won a medal in the girls' quad at a national event since 2010, so it's an achievement to build on last year's fifth place with a third place'.

'Our girls are the fastest Victorian girls crew in the country, without question, so this placing was never in doubt. It was a mature row for the girls, and they deserve the success they achieved.'

Mr Bartlett said one of the most satisfying aspects of the five-day event on Lake Barrington in Tasmania in late March was the recognition other rowing schools gave the Gippsland Grammar team.

Mr Bartlett said another highlight of the event was to see the school's students volunteer in supporting roles during their down time between races.

'That meant our students were holding the boats at the start line, directing traffic in the carpark and

some were even working with media crews or in the finish tower,' Mr Bartlett said. 'It was a great way for them to give back to rowing and also for them to meet and mix with students from other schools. It was a fulfilling experience for all involved'.

Just days after returning from Tasmania, more than 200 of Gippsland Grammar's rowers, staff and families attended a dinner at Maffco in Maffra for the Rowing Program's end-of-year dinner. Acting Principal Bo Power said the atmosphere at the event was symptomatic of the amazing and supportive culture of the school's Rowing Program.

'It was an authentic example of positive role models and the impact these have on the lives of our rowing students,' Mr Power said. 'Our school is so lucky to have a program like this for our students to be a part of.'

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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

Two Class of 2024 achievers perform and showcase their works



Isabella Godde standing by her oil on canvas *Untitled* at NGV

Former Gippsland Grammar student Isabella Godde's artwork in prestigious NGV exhibition

A stunning oil painting created as part of a Year 12 VCE assessment is now hanging in Melbourne's prestigious National Gallery of Victoria (NGV).

Gippsland Grammar Old Scholar Isabella Godde (Class of 2024) painted the oil on canvas as part of her VCE Art Making and Exhibiting studies last year, and the artwork was selected to be displayed at the NGV as part of this year's highly regarded Top Arts Exhibition, open to the public until 20 July.

Ms Godde – who is currently studying Podiatry at La Trobe University – attended the opening of the exhibition in March with her family and former Gippsland Grammar teachers. She said it was surreal to see her work hanging on walls alongside so many other fantastic artists.

'There were a lot of students from Melbourne schools included in Top Arts so, as an ex-country girl, I felt very special that I was there too,' Ms Godde said.

'It felt quite jarring when I first saw my art on the wall. What people don't realise is this work started for me at

the very beginning of Year 12, so it's like looking at an entire year's worth of work in just one place, which is quite surreal.

'I've only been to the exhibition once but a lot of my friends have visited, and they keep sending me photos of themselves standing in front of my artwork so that's been fun.'

Top Arts 2025 is part of the VCE Season of Excellence, which showcases the work from exceptional VCE students from the previous year to students striving to achieve those heights in their studies this year.

Gippsland Grammar Art Making and Exhibiting teacher Nadine Lineham said she was thrilled to join Isabella at the exhibition opening, and said the inclusion of her former student's work was well deserved.

'Isabella is such a deserving student to be short listed and selected for Top Arts 2025,' Ms Lineham said. 'I had the pleasure of teaching Isabella art for the past three years and I cannot speak highly enough about her dedication as an intelligent young artist.'

'From Year 10 onwards it was clear that she was committed to oil painting and learning as much as she could about its processes. This was clearly demonstrated in her final VCE year where Isabella was able to approach a theme where she could expand her visual language and include thick painterly aesthetic qualities which is very difficult to do well.

'It is an outstanding artwork. Isabella discovered parts of her voice and a visual language that has been waiting to be heard.'

The VCE Season of Excellence includes concerts by outstanding performing arts students in Dance, Drama, Theatre Studies and Music/Sound and all students who receive an A+ in their relevant subject exams are invited to audition for Top Class with only a small selection making the final presentation.

Isabella is one of two students from Gippsland Grammar's Class of 2024 to perform or showcase their work in this year's Top Class. The other student, Ivy Johnson, performed her Theatre Studies monologue as part of the Top Class Theatre Studies presentation.

Other members of Gippsland Grammar's Class of 2024 to find academic success since completing Year 12 include Georgia Anderson who was awarded a prestigious \$30,000 Gardiner Foundation Tertiary Scholarship, and former Community and Culture Prefect Henry Storer, who was awarded the Newton Education Trust Scholarship, valued at \$21,000.

Gippsland Grammar Acting Principal Bo Power said it was incredibly satisfying to see students continue to find success from their hard work during VCE, even once they have graduated.

'Our students work incredibly hard to reach their individual levels of success in their VCE,' Mr Power said. 'So to see this hard work recognised well beyond the ATARs is further validation of their hard work and passion for their studies.'

Isabella's artwork, *Untitled*, will be on display at the NGV's Ian Potter Centre at Federation Square, Melbourne until 20 July. Free entry.

www.ngv.vic.gov.au/exhibition/top-arts-2025/



Ivy Johnson performing at Melbourne Recital Centre

Ivy Johnson takes excellence from classroom to stage at MRC

Former Gippsland Grammar scholar Ivy Johnson debuted her achievements from the classroom to the stage of the

of a crowd of hundreds including her parents Rachel and Paul, siblings Mia (Class of 2022) and Bonnie (Year 11),

Melbourne's Recital Centre (MRC) on 11 March when she was invited to perform as part of this year's Top Class Theatre Studies.

Top Class Theatre Studies 2025 is part of the VCE Season of Excellence, which showcases the work from exceptional VCE students from the previous year to students striving to achieve those heights in their studies this year.

Ivy performed her Theatre Studies monologue from the play *Top Girls* by Carol Churchill, in front

cousin Tess Johnson (Class of 2022) and Theatre Studies teacher Christina Kyriakou.

Ms Kyriakou said it was fantastic to see Ivy's hard work pay off with this amazing opportunity at such an acclaimed city venue.

'It was wonderful to see a regional school represented in what has often been an event dominated by city schools,' Ms Kyriakou said. 'Ivy was amazing, so calm and composed, her acting was so convincing.'

Since graduating from Gippsland Grammar last year Ivy has moved to Melbourne and is studying a Bachelor of Arts/Media Communications at Melbourne University.

Ivy's mother Rachel Patton, also a Gippsland Grammar teacher, paid tribute to Ms Kyriakou's influence on her daughter's VCE success.

'Ms Kyriakou has been nurturing our students in Drama and Theatre Studies since 2017,' Ms Patton said. 'This is in addition to directing the school production each year and being a talented performer in local productions herself.'

The VCE Season of Excellence includes concerts by outstanding performing arts students.

'Making a difference' is driving regional students to school. Bus driver, Mark Goddard has just clocked over 10 years with Dysons Bus Services making a genuine impact on the lives of Gippsland Grammar students, their parents, the school and the overall community.

Mark says his purpose is to make a difference in other people's lives, and according to Gippsland Grammar it is fair to say he is doing just that.

'I love being part of this community and if I can be a positive influence on these young people, I will. I love it,' he said.

Mark has not had one day off the job since starting the Paynesville to Sale run. Not only does he deliver students to Gippsland Grammar campuses each day, but he also shuttles them from campus to campus, as well as helping out at Sale's McMillan Park transfer station, taking them to excursions, and senior student sport on Thursdays.

Roy Dyson, the bus line's Regional Services Operations Manager, was full of appreciation for the great relationship his business has had with Gippsland Grammar for more than 25 years.

'It's been a strong partnership built on trust and shared values, and we're proud to continue supporting the school's students and their families,' Roy Dyson said.

Mark grew up in Melbourne and would



Portrait of a bus driver

Dyson's bus driver Mark Goddard on the 'Marko Express'

enjoy 'bush holidays' with his parents, but it wasn't until he purchased a holiday house in East Gippsland that he had a yearning to call the region home. When he is not driving the bus, he spends time fishing and mastering his skills on the golf course.

'Life is more relaxed here, it's stress-free, and it makes it easier for me to make a difference in other people's lives.'

Mark acknowledges the team of drivers that make up the private bus network for Gippsland Grammar. 'We are a great team and we are all committed to the same purpose.'

Gippsland Grammar provides a private bus service throughout the entire region. Student Support Officer Rowie Gray said, 'More than 500 students of the independent co-educational school rely on bus travel daily.'

Rowie added that the school also supports regional students with late buses so they can attend after school activities like extra tutoring, sport and band or performance rehearsals, as well as boarding students when they participate in after school activities or require transport home on weekends.



Connecting with the Community

■ Lisa Ogilvie

The parish of Maffra (St John's and St George's) has been finding new ways to connect with members of our local community. Earlier this year, St John's held our first ever 'car boot sale' presenting an opportunity for both parishioners and members of the public to come together to rehome household items which are no longer required by their owners.

Some wonderful new connections were made, along with offering old friends the chance to catch up over scones.

On Shrove Tuesday, St John's hosted our annual 'pancake tea'. Many of the members of both St John's and St George's gathered together with other local churchgoers and members of the community to mark Shrove Tuesday, by partaking in both savoury and sweet pancakes made and served by our wonderful ladies.

Recently the members of St John's and St George's participated in a *Call, Push, Shock* session facilitated by St John Ambulance and Ambulance Victoria. Participants completed a short training session which covered what to do in a cardiac arrest situation, including commencing CPR and how to use our AED (Automated External Defibrillator).

Attendees also received a *Call, Push, Shock* kit. This initiative has upskilled our congregation in CPR and the use of our AED, should the need ever arise.

Our community meal initiative at St John's continues to grow and fill a genuine need in our local community. One night a month, a dedicated team

of volunteers from both St John's and St George's facilitate a free dinner meal for members of our local community.

This gives community members the opportunity to come together, partake in a two-course meal and enjoy each other's company.

For many, this may be a rare occasion for connecting with others. It provides an opportunity for the vulnerable members of our community (whether due to social isolation, financial hardship or any other struggles) to feel connected and engaged with both the Church and Christ.

This important ministry is helping us to form connections with members of our community we may not otherwise have contact with.

Lisa Ogilvie is Parish Councillor
Parish of Maffra.



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Celebrating cultural diversity at St Paul's



L-R: Estelle, Alexandra, Hayley, Lyla, Isabella, Daisy, Sienna and Chloe promoting 'harmony' within the Traralgon Campus school community

St Paul's Anglican Grammar School students embraced cultural diversity on 21 March being this year's Harmony Day. On this special day, students were encouraged to either wear cultural attire to celebrate global traditions or wear orange to symbolise social communication, the freedom of ideas and mutual respect.

Throughout the day students discussed the importance of valuing diversity and inclusion, with Harmony Day serving as a reminder of Australia's multiculturalism.

In the Junior Schools, educators delivered special lessons and activities in which students personalised their learning by sharing their family heritage and celebrating the cultural diversity of their school community.

At Warragul and Traralgon Secondary campus, the Student Harmony Advisory Committee (SHAC) and the Student Representative Council (SRC) joined forces to decorate a prominent tree in front of the main secondary building with vibrant orange fabric.

They organised plenty of orange-themed activities, including an art installation of orange paper hands, symbolising community. Fresh orange segments were distributed as a healthy treat and several students received prizes for having the 'best-dressed' orange outfits.

Meanwhile, at the Warragul Secondary School, the SRC invited students to unite



Victor and Ryder enjoying Harmony Day at Traralgon

for a picnic-style lunch on the grass, encouraging them to bring cultural foods and share the stories behind them.

In support of the day, secondary students showcased their creativity by creating chalk art across the yard, decorating trees with orange ribbons and enjoying dancing to music provided by the co-curricular AV Club during lunchtime.

The celebration highlighted the school's commitment to promoting respect, inclusivity and cultural understanding as a part of holistic wellbeing.

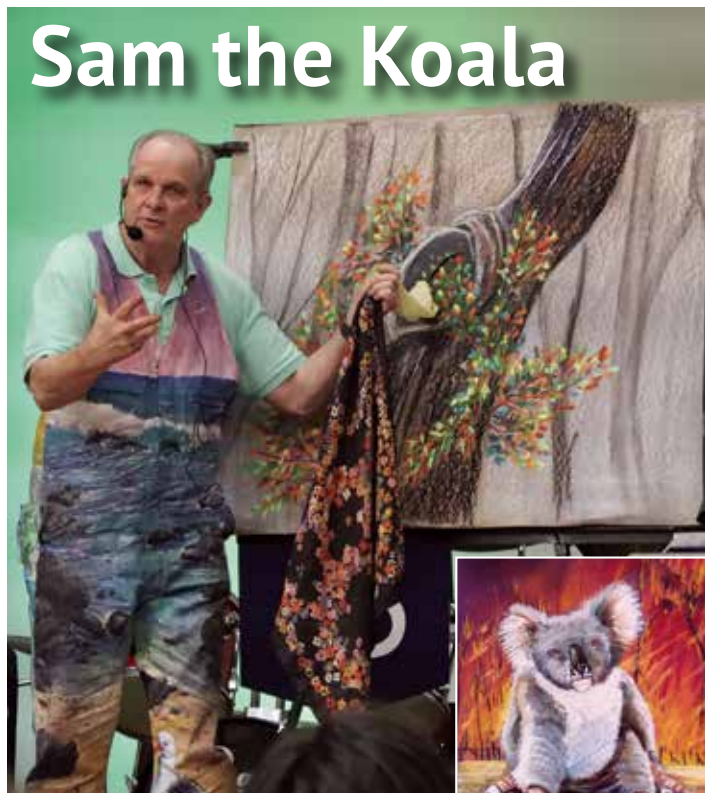
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Sam the Koala



The creative Rev'd Lynton Allan at work

■ The Rev'd Lynton Allan

Black Saturday 2009 was one of the worst natural disasters in Australia as 400 fires decimated the landscape. Over 2,000 homes were burned to the ground and 173 lives were lost as well as countless wildlife. Marysville was the worst town affected, but out of those ashes came a story of



Sam the Koala

was understood that the Australian bushland has the power of life to regenerate after fires.

Seed would germinate, new growth would arise out of the blackened ground and new fresh shoots would soon appear

hope. As a fireman was hosing down the still smouldering bush, he saw a small koala on the ground, weak and thirsty.

He knelt down with a bottle of water, and a video of the koala drinking went viral around the world. Sam the koala, as she was affectionately named, was taken to an animal shelter where her burns were treated, and soon she became a symbol of hope.

She had gone through the fires; her habitat had been destroyed, and she was a miracle survivor. She was a symbol of hope because it

on the gum trees. It takes time, but when visiting Marysville now the bush has regrown, wildlife has returned, and the community has rebuilt.

For me this is a way of thinking about the Easter story. It is surely the greatest symbol of hope for the world. Easter Friday was a day of darkness, death and despair, when Jesus the Son of God who embodied the love and life of God was put to death.

He was falsely accused by the imperial and religious powers, he was abandoned by his friends, tortured and crucified on a tree/cross.

It was Friday, but Sunday was coming. When some of his followers went to finish the burial rituals on that Sunday, they found to their astonishment that the cave/tomb was empty and from that empty space came the power of new life.

Jesus was alive and transformed so that space and time no longer constrained his presence. Forgiveness and the removal of shame and guilt was offered for all who sought reconciliation with God.

Love that can transform a person from the inside out overcame hate and fear. Eternal life of inner peace and joy that can be experienced now and forever was God's gift to all. This is why Easter is the symbol of hope for all and is celebrated around the world.

The Rev'd Lynton Allan is a Chaplain at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School.

St Paul's Reverend John Leaver Award recipient



St Paul's student Axel Sellings, presenting a speech at award day

As one of the 2024 Reverend John Leaver Award recipients, St Paul's Anglican Grammar School student, Axel Sellings was recently invited to present a short speech on the topic of 'Leaving it better' at the Ecumenical Schools Australia (ESA) Leaver Award Day in Melbourne, alongside other 2024 Year 11 recipients from ESA member schools.

The Rev'd John Leaver was a key figure in the establishment of ESA and was awarded the Order of Australia in 2000 for his services to education and his work in the community.

Each year, through the Reverend John Leaver Award, ESA honours a Year 11 student from each ESA member school who demonstrates characteristics similar to those of The Rev'd John Leaver: a demonstrated spirit of compassion; resilience – a sturdy resolve in the face of obstacles; the ability to connect with others, including those of other generations; and, broad-mindedness, like that which brings together people of different denominations and different faiths.

ESA is a network of independent, co-educational schools that share the common goal of continuously improving the education provided to students.



At the forefront of community service – Stacey in purple and Zoe in red



■ Joanne Stuchbery

Over past five years or so, the Parish of Leongatha has provided approximately 5,000 lunches. Every Wednesday, rain or shine, the faithful band of cooks, organisers, clergy and volunteers gather and open the doors of St Peter's Hall to the community for a home-cooked meal.

The Rev'd Belinda Seabrook is the driving force behind this movement. Sometimes a few and sometimes as many as fifty parishioners and community members join Belinda's team for sit down meals.

Integral to the Leongatha ministry are Stacey Williamson ('SW') who is a Lay Reader, and Zoe Hopwood ('ZH') who leads services and is also involved in liturgy. They have both completed the Ministry Development Program.

They were recently interviewed by our TGA correspondent Joanne Stuchbery ('JS') regarding their passion to *Cook and Serve*.

JS: Hi Stacey. I know you are a very busy lady, yet you still cook for the Wednesday community lunch every week. It may be a vegetable dish, a rice dish, or a meat or chicken dish. Why are you so involved?

SW: Hi Joanne. I continue to do what I do because I feel a deep sense of passion for the ministry. I love the community, I love food, and I love people so that ticks all the boxes. So, I'm really motivated to create meals and support the ministry.

There's no hierarchy. We're all on the journey of life.

JS: Stacey, you cook every week. You are so committed to this ministry. What do you think is the main aspect of the community lunch?

SW: It's a space where people can come and be amongst friends. There's a range of different types of people – broken people, healing people, Christians, non-Christians, with different characters and stories to tell!

JS: Thanks Stacey. And hello Zoe. You've been cooking here for a long time as well, and I believe you're known as the *dessert queen*.

ZH: Hi Joanne, yes, that sounds about right. I've always loved baking, which started from school. I enjoy the creative side of desserts.

JS: In a society where many young people are generally focused on themselves and what's in it for them, you spend time cooking and serving desserts to others. Desserts that appear one moment, then disappear minutes later.

ZH: Yes, however, I genuinely enjoy giving to those who need it. I see the joy on people's faces as they eat their meals and are filled physically, and in some ways spiritually as well. They are being nourished. Sharing and spreading the love of Jesus through food.

Jesus often shared his love through food. Sharing food brings people together.

Friendships and relationships are formed. This also helps with the isolation that some people feel.

JS: Thanks to both of you for sharing what's in your hearts about the community meal. You are inspirational! A witness of the love of Jesus to me and our fellow brothers and sisters in our local community.

Joanne Stuchbery is a TGA correspondent for the Parish of Leongatha.

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What a day at the Cathedral

Lindy Driver and Bishop Richard

■ Lindy Driver

The 28th day of March 2025 saw Mothers' Union (MU) ladies and gentlemen celebrate Lady Day at the Cathedral in Sale, and what a day we had! The sun was shining. Bishop Richard Treloar and The Very Rev'd Keren Terpstra who is Dean of St Paul's Cathedral in Sale, led a beautiful service.

Excitingly, I was officially commissioned on this day as President of the diocesan's Mothers' Union (*MU Gippsland*).

After the service, we had lunch and then listened to Dr Cath Connelly deliver an amazing and inspiring talk followed by nourishing spiritual harp music. The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding spoke of Mothers, women and men, who are looked at as being part of someone else, and not really seeing who they are as a person. Dean spoke of Mothers who carry a maternal mental-load and have a propensity to absorb the weight of pain or deficiency that children experience. He observed that the potential of mother-guilt seems to be an unfair and cruel bottomless pit.

Dean spoke of Mary and her journey as the mother of Jesus, stating he could not begin to imagine her feelings watching her son die. He then read a moving poem, *Mary At The Cross* written by Adrian Plass.

Dean spoke of St Non of Wales, who is best known as being the mother of Saint David the patron saint of Wales. St Non, a socially adept and flexible woman, was born the daughter of a powerful chieftain, but chose to become a nun and founded a convent, was resilient in the face of great traumas, and was a protector of her child from an attempted infanticide.

At the end of his sermon, Dean prayed:

God, give us all the wisdom to know the true and beautiful identities of each other without the oft-eclipsing referential connections. Let us see true identities in others, and let us know the true identities in ourselves. Amen.

Dr Cath Connelly spoke about us becoming wise women, and that wisdom

of the *inner wise woman* is learning how to be both truthful and compassionate, and it is knowing when to speak and what to say. To speak the truth is to be able to say – 'This is who I am.'

Cath shared her view that being a wise woman is about attitude – the attitude of Curiosity, the attitude of Knowing our Power, the attitude of Solidarity/Community, the attitude of Wonder and Awe, and the attitude of Gratitude.

She stated that being a modern wise woman is to understand that there is also a responsibility to the generation to come, that mentorship is needed – not to sit in judgement, but to act as wise counsel.

We do this by sharing our stories, offering advice, and coaching the young to navigate the undercurrents of the world today.

Cath emphasised that our greatest responsibility is to be a good ancestor, and finished with a quote by Jean Shinoda Bolen:

Round-bottomed, soft-bellied, irrational, magical, too caring, too carefree, proudly demanding, unfettered by dependence, sexually unashamed, hairy, hungry, unpredictable, silently present, intangibly distant, ceaselessly gossipy, alarmingly uninhibited, seething with potential, incomprehensible, altogether unfathomable, dangerous and deliciously powerful – we are the wise women.

So, watch out Gippsland Anglicans here we come, wise women who know who we are.

Mary At The Cross

by Adrian Plass

Today I do not want to be a branch of the vine
Or a part of the body
Or a sheep in the flock of the Good Shepherd
Or the bride of Christ
Or a disciple
Or a servant
Or an inheritor of the kingdom
Or a citizen of heaven
Or visited by angles
Or greatly blessed
Or deeply troubled
Or someone else's mother
I just want to get my son down from this wooden thing
And take him home
And make him better
And give him something to eat
And hear him laugh
And persuade him to give up being the Messiah
And go back to carpentry!

Lindy Driver is President of MU Gippsland.



Mothers' Union Worldwide President Kathleen Snow commissioned by Archbishop of York

L-R: Kathleen Snow, Worldwide President of Mothers' Union and the Most Rev'd Stephen Cottrell, the Archbishop of York, are among those gathered at the Commissioning Service at St Martin's in the Fields, London

On 24 March at St Martin-in-the-Fields in London, Kathleen Snow was formally commissioned by the Most Rev'd Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York, as Worldwide President of Mothers' Union, a global movement of 4 million members in over 84 countries.

Archbishop Cottrell reflected on the occasion:

It was a real joy to commission Kathleen Snow as the new Worldwide President of Mothers' Union today. Members across the world are united in their desire to make a difference in daily lives, bringing the hope and love of God in practical ways.

After 37 years as a member, including the last six years on the Worldwide Board, Kathleen Snow felt called to serve and was elected through a global vote to lead the 149-year-old movement.

Speaking at the service, Kathleen Snow shared her motivation to take on this role. 'We are stronger together. These words have been on my heart since I felt the calling to stand for Worldwide President.

Mothers' Union is more than an organisation – it is a way of life, a family of faith. Through our shared prayer and support, we grow together, answering Christ's call to *Come, Follow Me.*

As Mothers' Union moves towards its 150th anniversary in 2026, Kathleen and her board will lead under the theme *Join Us, Join In!* – a call to action to grow the movement in faith, fellowship, and funds to end poverty, injustice and violence for communities and families around the world.

The Right Rev'd Emma Ineson, Bishop of Kensington and Central Chaplain for Mothers' Union Worldwide, delivered an address during the commissioning service, emphasising the need for unity and service:

'During this special service, we celebrated the power of

community, faith, and action in growing God's kingdom. As we embrace our theme, *Join Us, Join In*, John 15:12 reminds us that true change begins by being *Joined Up* - rooted in Jesus, the true vine.

'Together with Him, we can be a force for transformation, strengthening families, communities, and faith.'

Source for article Australian Communion News Service.

Learn more about the Mothers' Union: www.mothersunion.org/.

A call for mercy and strength for Myanmar

On 28 March 2025, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake struck central Myanmar.

The death toll has now risen to over 3,000 people, with more than 4,000 injured. ABM (Anglican Board of Mission) AID is raising funds for emergency relief efforts in Mandalay and Taungoo, and are asking for your support.

Plans are underway to reach 1,000 affected people. Food packs consisting of rice, curry and one bottle of water are being provided to displaced people. Mosquito nets are also being provided to families who are staying out of their homes, sleeping on sidewalks and in open spaces in fear of another earthquake, or buildings collapsing around them.

Funds will go to assist our partner, the Church of the Province of Myanmar, with their emergency response.

Your support is urgently needed. Please consider donating today.

Donate online:

www.abmission.org/appeals/appeals-emergency/myanmar-earthquake.



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Choosing connection in a world determined to divide

■ Jules Cole

Do you feel like today, more than ever, you need to pick a side?

Does it seem that when people join a conversation, they are seeking to prove a point rather than find common ground?

Does it feel like political parties want to win arguments rather than solve problems?

Here across almost 42,000 square kilometres of beautiful Gippsland, we are not immune to the social and political divides that seem to be growing across the globe.

Our region is rapidly changing. Our population grew by almost a third between 2001 and 2021.

Projections indicate that by 2041, the number of people living in Gippsland will reach a total of 386,000. Alongside this population growth we are also seeing an increase in diversity of experiences, ancestries, cultures, identities and ideas. Twenty years ago, ideas like First Nations sovereignty, multiculturalism, LGBTIQ+ diversity, gender equality, climate justice – just to name a few – weren't as visible

in our Gippsland communities as they are today.

For many of us, this change can feel overwhelming. It represents a perceived loss of control, and our default position can be to assume that it is for the worse. Familiarity feels safe. Things that are different can feel threatening – even when they aren't.

So how do we connect with each other when we live in a world that feels so angry and divided? How do we challenge our assumptions and stereotypes about people who are different from ourselves?

Earlier this year I collaborated with the Baw Baw Islamic Network to organise the first ever Mosque Open Day in Warragul. Following this I worked with Women In Gippsland to support its International Women's Day Picnic In The Park.

What inspired me to be part of these initiatives was the simple theme that sat at the heart – connection.

Both events aimed to create a space for meaningful connection that

transcended faith, ability, background, age and identity. Participants were encouraged to listen to each other with empathy, ask questions from a place of curiosity, and smile at a stranger without fear.

We need more events that celebrate each other's humanity. But instead of waiting for others to initiate this, let's act now to learn about other perspectives and build genuine connections with people who may seem different to us.

And what if we discover that connecting with new ideas or different people turns out to be a precious gift – and not something to be feared after all?

When we choose connection, we choose something that is bigger than ourselves. We take a step closer to each other, we bridge those divides that seem to be growing, and we recognise that in the end, we're all in this together.

Jules Cole is a community connector working in social policy.

Our commitment to a safe church

The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland is committed to ensuring our centres of worship and outreach are safe places for all, and it does not tolerate abuse or misconduct by church workers.

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Living as the forgiven people of God

An Easter reflection in two parts

■ Canon David Head

PART 1

As we move into the great Christian Season of Easter Joy and Hope and Assurance of God's Love for all his people, I ask you, what is more important for all of us as Christians than actually 'Living as the forgiven people of God'?

We believe that Christ died for our sins (past, present and future) on the Cross, and through the great cosmic act of the Resurrection, Christ restored humankind to a full forgiven relationship with God.

How then do we live as the forgiven people of God we believe we are?

The first thing to say is that it is not as to do as it may sound. Strangely, forgiveness and reconciliation between people is one of the most traumatic things that is argued and fought over in our society.

Relationship breakdown and divorce in families bring deep heartache. Sadly, they often involve mutual blame, feelings of guilt, depression, and even violent anger. Sometimes, there is a dark desire for payback or revenge for the hurt experienced—whether real or imagined.

Many cultures in today's world live under oppressive layers of centuries of hatred, mistrust, and desire for revenge, usually originating in often quite ancient histories of persecution and betrayal.

These hatreds are passed down in the father's daily cursing and the mother's milk of bitterness, such that children can grow up having absorbed seething hatreds that bear no relationship to their actual personal experience of those they have been taught to hate.

It is very hard for those of us who have grown up in countries like Australia to understand the hatreds and seething bitterness that savagely bind up the hearts and minds of those in many complicated Middle Eastern and tribal African conflicts, or the fury of nationalistic and religious areas of violence in Asia and the Balkan and Slavic regions of our world.

And, of course, we must be all aware of the ongoing suffering of our Aboriginal brothers and sisters as they face and try to deal with two centuries of bigotry and hate and pain and loss of culture. We face a world that, in many places, is bitterly divided against itself.

We, as Christians, are those who fundamentally believe in the forgiving,

reconciling love of God, and are strongly commanded by Christ to live that forgiveness, and even to love our enemies. If we ourselves can't get it right so much of the time, then what hope has the rest of the world in achieving such a high aim?

The Christian Churches, between the awful First World War and the tragic events that began the Second World War, could have made an immense difference to the shaping of possible peace and reconciliation in the world, but generally they failed to do this, due to self-interest and self-preservation at all costs.

As we know, it was a time when brutal and totalitarian leaders arose in many countries such as Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Hungary, China and Japan, and the Christian Church and other religious faiths failed to speak out and condemn the clear abuses arising around them. All these leaders began their horrifying rises to power with great popular and unthinking support.

This acquiescence enabled their hellish abuse of those who opposed them, and those they wanted disposed of and eliminated for all sorts of reasons. Instead of being a beacon of hope and Christ-like justice, the church often through ignorance or apathy ended up tacitly siding with the unjust and the oppressor. Our world reaped the whirlwind of death and destruction that followed.

Forgiveness and compassionate justice are at the very heart of God's desire for the world. This necessarily brings with it care for the oppressed, persecuted and downtrodden, and a non-violent but powerful opposition to any form of racism, bigotry, and violent abuse in all its nasty forms. How do you forgive all this appalling history, especially if you were one of those who suffered so horribly during that great period of torment?

For Christians, the sacrament at the core of forgiveness is the Sacrament of Confession and Absolution.

We are called by our faith to bring to God our hardheartedness and selfishness, our arrogance and pride, our lusts and greediness, our hatreds and deep bitterness, and of course our apathy and complacency.

We are called by Christ's message to repent and seek God's forgiveness. We are called to lay open our own unhappy consciences and our compromised behaviours and to be blessed by the cleansing power of God's forgiving love and desire for our wholeness and the well-being of our body, mind and soul.

We are called to fire up our commitment to try harder each day to be the people of Christ's hope and compassionate love to the world around us.

Every time we come to a service of the Eucharist, we take part in that section of the service called the Confession and Absolution. We begin by saying,

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word and deed. We have not loved you with our whole heart. We have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We repent and are sorry for all our sins. Father forgive us...

The presiding priest reminds and assures us that through our open, heartfelt confession, God is gracious and forgives us all that we have done and repented of, even those things we may fail to remember.

God's Holy Spirit takes from us the burden of guilt, and gives us strength and hope to pick up our life again and to try to make a better go of it from now on.

Note: Part 2 of this article is to be published in TGA June 2025 edition.



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Watching *Adolescence* and Wrestling with Modern Masculinity

■ The Rev'd Canon Daniel Lowe

One of the best things I have done recently was watching the Netflix series *Adolescence* – not just watching it but watching it with my 15-year-old son. That decision didn't make the series any less harrowing, but it did make it more hopeful. I'd actually watched the first episode on my own, and I was left feeling heavy and a little lost. But watching episodes two to four together gave us the chance to pause, reflect, and talk in the moment.

And the moment that undid me – again – was the final scene. I was in tears, overwhelmed by the grief of a father who felt that he had somehow failed his son. My own son saw me crying and said the most beautiful thing possible. 'Do you need a hug?' And then he hugged me.

That moment will stay with me. It's rare to find a piece of media that captures the raw emotional terrain of parenting – especially fathering boys – so honestly and unflinchingly. *Adolescence* is brilliant, painful, and deeply human. I connected most with the father character – not because I'm like him, but because I recognised his helplessness. His grief. His confusion at a world that no longer seems to speak his language.

There's a scene where the investigating officer's teenage son explains to him the coded online culture around emojis, memes, and the so-called 'manosphere.' It's a world that many parents (and teachers) may be only vaguely aware of, but it shapes the way many boys think about themselves – and about women. Part of the conversation between my son and I was around teen language and some of the ideas and symbols related to the manosphere. There were things I knew about that he wasn't aware of, and things he was very familiar with that I only vaguely recognised. I think we both learnt something new.

We also talked a bit about how interactions go down at school in his real-life experience, including how teachers sometimes react to student interaction. There was a moment in the second episode, which is set mostly in the school, when both my son and I commented that they had captured the whole school atmosphere perfectly – although we both noticed different things that rang true for us. The not-so-subtle bullying of the empty wrappers dumped on a tray; the obnoxious clown moved to the front row of class and the subsequent amusement of his buddies in the back row; the teacher who grumbled, 'We're security guards and social workers now, are we? Great.'

The series didn't tell me anything I didn't already suspect, but it was a sobering reminder of just how confused and vulnerable young men are as they try to find themselves in a world of relentless online connection and contradictory expectations.

The Limit of Just 'Being a Good Human'

I've previously argued that the best place to start when raising boys is to talk about what makes a good human, rather than what makes a good man. I still think that's a helpful foundation. In a world filled with confusing messages about gender, anchoring our kids in virtues like kindness, compassion, courage, and humility gives them something solid.

But I'm no longer convinced we can stop there. Gender matters. And while the idea of being a good human is essential, our boys are constantly navigating messages that tie their value, worth, and identity to being a certain kind of man. We can't leave them to figure it out alone.

The Apostle Paul writes in *Galatians*: 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). He's not denying the existence of those categories – elsewhere he clearly addresses them – but he's insisting they are not ultimate. They don't define our value or our belonging. And yet, they do shape our lived experience.

So yes, let's start by asking what kind of person someone is becoming. But then we must also ask: how do we help our sons be men of character, men of compassion, men who know how to be strong and gentle, just and merciful?

Narrow Scripts, Loud Labels

Part of the challenge is that our cultural understanding of gender roles remains frustratingly narrow. For much of the twentieth century – particularly in eras like the 1950s – gender roles were rigidly defined. Men were expected to be stoic providers, women, nurturing homemakers. It was a model that offered clarity and predictability, even if it came with serious limitations and exclusions. I'm certainly not advocating a return to that time – the decade is more symbolic than prescriptive – but I can understand the appeal of its simplicity. The problem is, rather than recognising that those traditional roles were flawed, we've increasingly turned on the concept of gender itself, treating it as the root of the problem rather than the outdated expectations we've attached to it.

That cultural confusion leaves many young men stranded. With no clear or affirming model of masculinity to aspire to, they're left to piece together their identity from whatever sources they can find. And when the dominant message they hear is that masculinity itself is inherently problematic, we shouldn't be surprised when they seek out spaces – sometimes toxic ones – that offer them affirmation, identity, and belonging.

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Voices like Andrew Tate – the poster boy of the manosphere – offer a model of masculinity built on control, dominance, and entitlement. They blame women for men's problems and present men as victims of a feminist conspiracy. It is both dangerous and wildly appealing to boys who feel unseen or uncertain.

Steve Rose, writing in *The Guardian*, explores the spread of the 'sigma male' ideal:

Sigma masculinity has blown up. It's all over social media... and it's helped define what could be a masculine archetype for our times, supposedly exemplified by characters played by the likes of Keanu Reeves, Cillian Murphy, Bryan Cranston and Christian Bale, plus the manosphere influencer Andrew Tate as well as actual, real life wolves. All of these and more have gone into the meme-culture blender when it comes to the sigma phenomenon, which could well be an indication of how deep it has seeped into the mainstream, and by extension into the minds of our impressionable, smartphone-addicted youth.

www.theguardian.com/society/article/2024/jun/12/the-sad-stupid-rise-of-the-sigma-male-how-toxic-masculinity-took-over-social-media

Even boys who reject these messages find it hard to avoid them. Tomorrow Man, a social enterprise aimed at reinventing masculinity, has this to say about the appeal and prevalence of damaging views of masculinity:

As another spanner in the works, these online spaces are usually super engaging. When your worth is being validated by an interactive community, it's easy to understand why our teenage boys can get hooked on the dark sides of the manosphere.

The Role of Algorithms

Here's where it gets extra tricky. If your son watches a video on YouTube or engages with a post about Andrew Tate or another figure in the manosphere, the platform's algorithm might automatically start recommending more of the same content.

www.respect.gov.au/

www.tomorrowman.com.au/blog-posts/navigating-the-manosphere-understanding-the-online-world-of-teenage-boys

The Other Message: All Men Are Dangerous

On the other side of the cultural spectrum, the messaging hasn't been all that helpful either. One of the unfortunate side effects of some of the messaging around women's empowerment is the unspoken suggestion that men are universally untrustworthy or dangerous. The term 'toxic masculinity' is often used in ways that imply that all masculinity is toxic. One phrase I came across recently stuck with me: 'pale, male, and stale.' It was in *The Age*, in an article by a female columnist criticising a male radio DJ for saying derogatory things about Matildas star Sam Kerr. And to be clear, his comments deserved criticism. But what struck me was how casually the writer reduced him to a stereotype—doing exactly what she criticised him for: casual sexism.

Cathy Young, writing almost a decade ago in *The Washington Post* (and republished in *The Age*), warned:

A lot of feminist rhetoric today does cross the line from attacks on sexism into attacks on men, with a strong focus on personal behaviour: the way they talk, the way they approach relationships, even the way they sit on public transport. Male faults are stated as sweeping condemnations; objecting to such generalisations is taken as a sign of complicity... Whatever the reasons for the current cycle of misandry – yes, that's a word, derided but also adopted for ironic use by many feminists – its existence is quite real.

www.theage.com.au/opinion/feminists-treat-men-badly-and-its-bad-for-feminism-20160703-gpxbcp

Much of what she predicted has come to pass. The result? Some men are alienated. Some become angry. And some get recruited into online spaces that feed on that anger.

To be clear: we must continue to fight for the rights and safety of women. The statistics on violence against women in Australia are sobering. But this is not a zero-sum game. We do not need to devalue men in order to value women.

Gender and Sexuality in Public Discourse

We also can't ignore the impact of public discourse around gender and sexuality more broadly. From the vitriol surrounding the same-sex marriage debate to the ongoing battles around transgender participation in sport, our national conversation has often generated far more heat than light. Both sides have contributed to a climate of fear, mistrust, and confusion.

For many young men, this has created a sense of walking on eggshells. They don't know what they're allowed to say, feel, or be. They hear the loudest voices – from the manosphere on one side and from reactionary corners of activism on the other – and they tune out of the conversation altogether. Or worse, they buy into one extreme because it at least offers clarity.

A Different Kind of Power

This is where Christian faith offers something different. Not a return to patriarchal models of dominance, but a reimagining of power itself.

Jesus never told his followers to seize power. He told them to give it up. 'The one who is greatest among you must be your servant' (Matthew 23:11). And Paul reminds us that 'God's power is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Instead of focusing on how to empower one gender over another, perhaps we should focus on how to 'emvalue' everyone equally. Yes, I know it's not a real word. But maybe it should be. It means (in my mind) to imbue someone with value.

Men and women alike bear the image of God. Jesus lifted the value of powerless women by restoring their dignity. He challenged powerful men to give up control and serve. That's a model worth following.

What I Want for My Sons

So, what does healthy masculinity look like? Honestly, it's hard to define. But when I think about my own sons, here's what I hope for:

- I want them to be honest.
- I want them to treat women with respect – not performatively, but from a place of deep conviction.
- I want them to handle powerful emotions – anger, desire, frustration – with self-discipline and wisdom.
- I want them to contribute positively to the world around them, whether through creativity, service, or the integrity they bring to everyday life.

Would I want the same for daughters? Probably. But I suspect it would look different somehow. Or perhaps we'd just label it differently.

In the end, I still believe the place to begin is with the question: *What kind of human are you becoming?* But we must go further. We must walk with our boys through the complex terrain of masculinity – not by denying it, or condemning it, but by reimagining it.

It's hard work. But it's worth it. Especially when it ends with a hug from your teenage son after a tough conversation and a powerful story well told.

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

Surprised By Meaning:

Science, Faith, and How We Make Sense of Things

Alister E. McGrath

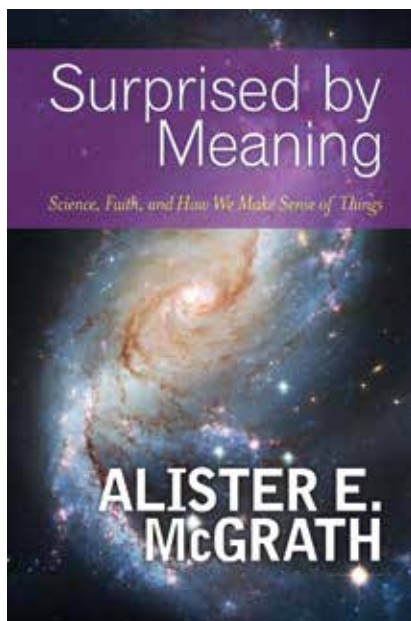
Louisville, Westminster

John Knox Press, 2011

■ **Richard Prideaux**

This is an outstanding defence of the Christian Gospel by a scientist, theologian and prolific author of theological issues and Biblical history. McGrath opens up his subject with a challenging analysis of why we long to make sense of things and yearn to see the whole picture of our world and its story with us in the middle. McGrath regularly challenges leading atheistic writers like Richard Dawkins who seem to have spent their lifetime trying to prove that the Universe 'has no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference'.

McGrath quickly establishes the important point that although Sciences may be able to say many things about the universe there are many issues about which scientists cannot be expected to say anything at all. These issues include ultimate questions such as what is the point of living, what are we here on earth for, what is ethical, and in what direction



should science move in the areas of, for example weapons of mass destruction, moral guidance, social purpose and personal identity. McGrath notes that science is morally blind and atheist Richard Dawkins himself admits that 'science has no methods for deciding what is ethical'.

Chapters in McGrath's book include issues such as the 'longing to make sense of things', 'important beliefs that cannot be proved' eg:

- the chemical formula for water
- the human quest for meaning (beyond the scientific horizon)
- a Christian view point on surprised by meaning
- the deep structure of the universe
- the mystery of the possibility of life
- accidents of biological history
- history
- culture
- faith issues
- the heart's desire
- longing for significance.

The author includes detailed notes and a very useful index.

I have read many of McGrath's books over the years. This is one of his best I think.

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



Russell Jones

■ **Russell Jones**

I remember, sometime in my youth there was a song that regularly played on the radio: *Horror Movie* by an Australian band called Skyhooks, first released in December 1974, Google tells me. (My wife,

Sheena, is surprised I even know about this, it is not really my thing, but in those far-off days of only radio and TV it was difficult to avoid whatever was the current pop. But I digress.)

The song basically repeats *Horror Movie, right there on my TV* until the punchline at the end *It's the 6:30 news!* The band didn't know that soon Cyclone Tracy would devastate Darwin; but they had seen the news of more than 20,000 Chinese killed in an earthquake in May. The Vietnam War still going; President Nixon resigned after the Watergate scandal; a coup had overthrow Haille Selasi in Ethiopia ...

... a horror movie that keeps on playing through to our own time to wars in Sudan, Afghanistan, Israel/Palestine, an ongoing civil war in Burma/Myanmar, where government bombs places struck by a massive earthquake. I have had the privilege at times of listening a little to refugees from most of these conflicts.

The memory of this song was stirred by the book I'm listening to on a podcast. It's a complex book that includes large sections of unrelenting terror and horror.

My punchline – as some may have guessed since this is a Church magazine – my punchline is, 'It's the Bible!'

For about three years, I have been inconsistently following a podcast called *The Bible in a Year*. The Scriptures are read by Fr Mike Schmitz, who also makes a few comments.

Just today, Fr Mike described the recent contents of the Readings as, 'like a horror movie'. He was summing up at the completion of the Books of Joshua and Judges. I will not say more about these horrors.

Each episode of the podcast has a note that, 'the Bible contains adult themes that may not be suitable for children – parental discretions is advised'. A warning not just for children.

Fr Mike emphasises that the terrible things described are not somehow 'good things' because they are in the Bible, and the people who do those terrible things are not 'good people' because they are in the Bible. Amen!

As an example of such misunderstandings, my favourite joke is about a minister giving a children's talk at Easter.

How We Learn to be Brave

Decisive Moments in Life and Faith

Mariann Edgar Budde

Milton Keynes: Authentic Media

2023

■ **Timothy Gaden**

Everyone hopes – should the time come – that their faith will stand the test and that their witness to the Gospel will be fearless.

We can all take encouragement from Bp Mariann Budde, the Anglican Bishop of Washington, D.C., who, not once but twice, has stood the test: first, in 2020, publicly denouncing President Trump's actions in using tear gas to clear Black Lives Matter protesters from the front of a church in her Diocese, so that he could take a photo opportunity holding up a Bible; and then, earlier this year, urging President Trump in a sermon at the National Cathedral prayer service to show mercy to immigrants and LGBTIQ+ individuals.

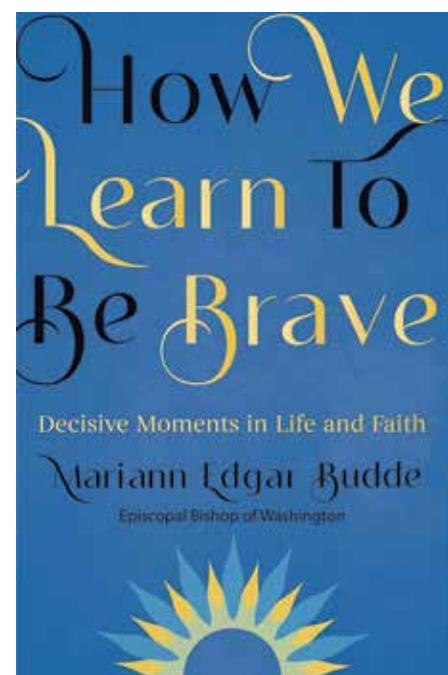
In this excellent book, Bp Budde unfolds her conviction that all of us have the capacity to be brave when it counts. The courage for this, she believes, comes from reflecting on the stories of scripture, of other people's lives and of our own lives.

In a series of chapters that are part autobiography and part theology (and often both), she does just this – exploring first how we grow into 'the courage we need to go,' 'the courage we need to stay,' 'the courage to start,' and 'the courage to accept what we do not choose.'

The emotional heart of the book is the fifth chapter: 'Stepping up to the plate'. Here, drawing on her own two celebrated experiences, she suggests that in the face of the call to be courageous, when we feel most inadequate, is exactly where we discover, 'a power greater than ourselves acting through our offerings' (p.109).

She draws out many moments in scripture and in the history of the civil rights movements in America when people who considered themselves completely lacking became transformative agents of change for communities around them.

In a final chapter on the importance of perseverance, she finds that the most significant lessons of leadership in church and outside it, come from grasping hold of one's resilience and compassion. Throughout, the book is a most impressive example of theological reflection, drawing meaning from the wealth of stories that



surround her. This is both inspiring in itself and an invitation for us to do the same.

Everyone who is interested in nurturing the call of their discipleship with greater courage, greater self-knowledge and a greater awareness of God's grace, will benefit from this book.

The Rev'd Dr Timothy Gaden is the Rector of Maffra.

'What has long ears, a big fluffy tail, and hops?' One young boy – young in years at least – sighs, then replies, 'It sounds like a bunny to me, but this is church so I guess it must be Jesus.'

If it's in the Bible it must be good. Unless there are obviously baddies, in which case they deserve it. This can be a horrible temptation for us, particularly if we start to think that whatever we do, especially as leaders and clergy, must be good because we are doing it. We are the goodies aren't we? Lord, have mercy.

Lent has been difficult as I follow the news of the day, then compare these stories in the Bible. Too many things are too similar. I wonder if Jesus also preached to all those who suffered those horrors (see 1 Peter 3:18-20).

I hope so. I struggle to accept the message that the Bible simply describes the world we live in, which is the real world that Jesus lived and suffered in, died and rose to new life for – not just for the innocents, but for every single person who has breathed on earth, however tarnished, however profoundly guilty.

In that, we all seek hope and promise; perhaps with a little remorse and repentance thrown in.

The Rev'd Russell Jones is a retired Uniting Church Minister who now worships at St Mary's Anglican Church, Morwell, as he is able. His best musical memory is hearing Dizzy Gillespie play live in South Melbourne in the 1980s.

EVENTS

For events at The Abbey, see page 8

MAY

16–18 Diocesan Synod, St Paul's Cathedral Sale and Garnsey Campus Gippsland Grammar

27 May–3 June National Reconciliation Week: *Bridging Now to Next*

www.reconciliation.org.au/our-work/national-reconciliation-week/

JUNE

23–26 Diocesan Clergy Conference, The Abbey

JULY

6–13 NAIDOC Week: *The Next Generation Strength, Vision & Legacy*

The Easter Anthem

Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us:
so let us celebrate the feast,
not with the old leaven of corruption and wickedness:
but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Christ once raised from the dead dies no more:
death has no more dominion over him.
In dying he died to sin once for all:
in living he lives to God.

See yourselves therefore as dead to sin:
and alive to God in Jesus Christ our Lord.
Christ has been raised from the dead:
the first fruits of those who sleep.

For as by one man came death:
by another has come also the resurrection of the dead;
for as in Adam all die:
even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

The Easter Anthem / Hymn of the Risen Christ
See 1 Cor 5:7-8, 15:20-22 and Romans 6:9-11
Text from Together in Song 259.

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