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Marking milestones along the pilgrim way

As a deacon and priest for more than 25 years, The Rev'd Thelma Langshaw has served the people of East Gippsland with compassion and care, including in Omeo since 2009 and as diocesan Mothers' Union Chaplain for more than 20 years.

People from across the Diocese gathered at the Cathedral on 2 August to celebrate Thelma's ministry and mark her retirement. The occasion also comes as Mothers' Union celebrates 150 years of faith and service.

Thelma is pictured with diocesan MU President Mrs Lindy Driver (left) and Lay Canon Mrs Jan Misiurka (right).

(Read more on page 5.)



Taking the long way home



Supertramp's 1979 anthem 'Take the Long Way Home' could have been the modern soundtrack for that ancient epic *The Odyssey*. Homer's eighth-century-BCE classic – probably an oral tradition that was 'riffed' variously by itinerant bards before finding its final written form – has become wildly popular again courtesy of Christopher Nolan's cinematic retelling, albeit to mixed reviews.

I had to explain to our teenage children that Homer in this case is not Homer Simpson, the contemporary source of homespun philosophy in the long running cartoon series that bears his name! And they loved the film, by the way.

Nolan's isn't the first adaptation of this epic poem for the screen. The Coen brothers offered a loose and darkly comical take on it at the turn of the last century in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* There are many more literary tributes, of course, from James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad*, going right back to the apocryphal Book of Tobit, which has been said to owe something to *The Odyssey*.

Homer's philosophy is also 'home-spun' in a sense, or perhaps 'home-spinning'. After his triumphs in the Trojan war, Odysseus has to negotiate a meandering and at times treacherous homecoming – one that is also a search for his true identity.

His is a journey that asks everything of him, every wit at his disposal. In the course of finding his place, his community, he risks losing everything, facing a series of temptations along the way that threaten to distract him from his course: the insatiable Cyclops; the alluring song of the sirens; a strangely sentient herd of pigs; interminable, intoxicating leisure on the island of an infatuated goddess, Calypso.

As a hero, Odysseus is by no means squeaky clean. He is, by turns, wily, deceptive, vengeful. His heroism, such

as it is, lies in the consistent sense of purpose which orients his wanderings toward things of profound personal and ethical value, and in his refusal, ultimately, to hide his true self.

It is the particular 'home-spinning' brilliance of Homer that these great themes are worked out as much in the smaller, domestic scenes of his extended verse as they are in Odysseus' highest achievements of bravery, skill or intelligence: in the simple daily ritual of conversation, and in the offering of hospitality to friends and strangers alike.

Such indiscriminate hospitality is the law of Zeus: that one must treat everyone kindly, for they might be gods in disguise – a divinely ordered principle with a pragmatic application in a world of travel and trade where, as Nolan has put it, everyone was at the mercy of strangers (see the review by Giles Gough in *Seen & Unseen*: <https://bit.ly/4bA5Y5q>)

Indeed, it is Odysseus' guilt for instrumentalizing this law in the belly of the Trojan horse that drives him to 'take the long way home', almost penitentially.

In the end, the question of identity is not one that Odysseus can answer on an island, as the sole survivor of the challenges his life has thrown at him. As he nears his journey goal – his homecoming – some twenty years on and in disguise, the story progresses by a series of recognitions by those closest to him, including his faithful dog, Argus.

It's as if Odysseus cannot fully reclaim his identity apart from real fellowship with the human community in which he is set, where the moral order he seeks on a grand scale is tested and proven in a more intimate setting.

The ancient tenet that hospitality is the scaffolding of life's shared journeying is not the property of any one spiritual, artistic, or philosophical tradition. At our recent Clergy Conference we were reminded of a rich and equally nuanced source of this wisdom in the Hebrew Scriptures, especially in the stories

of Abraham and the three visitors – identified to the reader as the Lord – and of Lot and the two young men (or are they angels?) in Genesis 18 and 19 – a narrative block that surely gives rise to the exhortation in Hebrews to show hospitality to strangers, thereby perhaps entertaining angels unawares (Heb 13:2).

As a fan of the Book of Tobit – which, unusually for works within or on the edges of the canon of Scripture, offers a cameo role to a dog – I would also give a shout out here to Azariah, who is unambiguously an archangel in disguise (Raphael) in that story of homecoming and hospitality.

There is another story of a prodigal who, like Odysseus, spends everything in his quest for identity, and finds hospitality (of a sort) with a swineherd, before turning for home and navigating a delicate and tender reunion with his people, though not all were happy to see him.

This parable is writ large in the one who sojourned in the far places of our flesh, risking all – the wayfaring God, incognito, as it were – revealing to us the radical inclusion and measureless hospitality of that kingdom where there is room at the household's table for everyone who draws near, and enough and to spare.

Yet hear this, Homer's masterpiece cautions: if the law of Zeus – that overarching precept of divine hospitality – is not honoured, tribulation will surely follow; a cautionary eighth-century-BCE tale for our twenty-first-century-CE world.

How might we who follow the law of Christ – urged on by the love of Christ – model this universally gracious teaching in our churches and communities, such that our true home is not a contested space of scarcity in which the fittest (or the wiliest) survive, so much as that roomier neighbourhood where all may thrive and find – at length – the belonging of home.

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L-R: Carole Broxham, David Perryman, Rae Riley, Jules Lanham, David Craig, Wendy Eastgate, Bishop Richard, Richard Gijbsers and Krista Mountford

Welcome to our new Registry Office page in TGA.

Each month, we'll use this space to share a little of what's happening behind the scenes at the Registry Office, along with important updates and information for parishes across the Diocese. We'll also introduce you to members of our team, helping you get to know the people behind the emails and phone calls and learn a little more about the work they do.

Most importantly, we hope this page will help strengthen the connection between the Registry Office and our parishes, and provide another way for us to share, communicate and stay connected. Stay tuned!

Looking ahead: Registry Office review

■ Krista Mountford

The Registry Office team (as well as Richard Gijbsers – Chair of the Finance Committee and Carole Broxham – Chair of the Governance Working Group) recently stepped away from the day-to-day busyness of the office for two days together – a chance to reflect, have some good conversations and think about where we're heading next.

Held at The Abbey on Raymond Island on 28–29 July and expertly facilitated by David Craig from Adegget Consulting, the review gave us the space to take a good look at how the Registry Office currently works, what we do well, where some of our challenges lie, and how we can best support the parishes, ministries and people of our Diocese.

We began by looking at the bigger picture and some of the changing needs and expectations across the Diocese. We also spent time reviewing our roles and responsibilities and working through an extensive SWOT analysis – looking honestly at our strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and challenges ahead.

One of the nicest things to come from this process was recognising the strength of the team itself. We're a small but flexible group, bringing together a wide range of skills and experience,

strong relationships and, importantly, a genuine care for the work we do and the people we work with.

From there, we turned our attention to the future. There were plenty of ideas (and plenty of discussion!) as we worked through priorities and goals and began shaping a new strategic plan for the Registry Office. While there is still more work to be done, some of the broad areas we're looking at include how we work together as a team, strengthening communication and relationships with parishes, working more closely with our partners and networks, and supporting volunteers across the Diocese.

Just as importantly, the two days gave us time to simply be together away from our usual routines. The beautiful surrounds of The Abbey – along with the delicious catering and warm hospitality – made it a lovely place to work and reflect. We also headed into Paynesville for a team dinner and enjoyed the chance to relax and spend time together.

We came away from the two days with plenty to keep working on, but also with fresh energy and a real sense of excitement about what's ahead.

Krista Mountford is the TGA Editor and Diocesan Development Officer.

Thoughts on our Registry Office review

Rae Riley – Registrar

'The Registry Office review was a valuable opportunity to take an honest look at our current structure, workload and capacity. It's clear we need to reshape and strengthen the Registry, and I'm looking forward to working with the team to put those changes in place so we can better support our parishes, ministries and the wider Diocese.'

Jules Lanham – Clearance Officer

'It is amazing how much work can be achieved under good guidance. The planning has left me with great excitement and expectancy for what the rest of the year holds.'

Having some clear direction and jobs to be done, for me, will help me mould the position of Clearance Officer into a well-defined role.'

Wendy Eastgate Finance/Administration Officer

'I found the two days to be very informative and productive, which from my experience can not always be said! It was an eye opener to see all the things we do and what is on everyone's plate. The planning day and the resulting Strategic Plan felt like the next step in our current transformative journey. I feel very motivated to continue our work on improving processes and ensuring the work we do adds value not only to our parishes but also the Diocese.'

Bishop Richard

'The facilitated review at The Abbey reminded me of how blessed we are to have such a skilled and dedicated team of Registry staff led by Rae Riley. It also highlighted what we ask of these good people, whose remunerated fractions add up to just 4.5 EFTs, in terms of the operational demands of such a large and complex organisation. Please pray with and for our sisters and brothers in the Registry Office as they seek to best serve Gippsland Anglicans, that we in turn might be released into ministry, taking up our share of God's mission to the world in Christ.'



The Deans gathered at St Paul's Cathedral, Sale

■ Keren Terpstra

This year St Paul's Cathedral hosted Deans from around Australia, and one from New Zealand, for our annual conference. Each year we aim to gather at one of our cathedrals to reflect together on cathedral life, and what it is to be the Dean of a cathedral.

We started with a Welcome to Country hosted by The Rev'd Kathy Dalton, who shared with us some of the significant cultural knowledge of the area and of the Gunaikurnai. She also generously gifted each Dean with a small bowl handcrafted by a local First Nations artist.

On that same opening evening (Thursday 30 July) we attended a Reception at the Wellington Shire offices, complete with sumptuous food and a video which exhibited some of the beauty and rarity Gippsland has to offer. The theme of enjoying the natural surrounds of Gippsland continued on Friday as we journeyed out to The Abbey on Raymond Island for a Quiet Morning. My colleagues enjoyed exploring the island and snapping some cooperative koalas and kangaroos. Many thanks to Gippsland Grammar for the generous loan of a bus to ferry us to The Abbey and back.

Saturday, we spent time together in camera, although we ducked out for lunch at MAFCO in Maffra. On Sunday some Deans visited local parishes at Heyfield and Stratford, while at the

Cathedral we celebrated St Anne's Day, with the presence of many 'Green Grubs' (St Anne's alumnae), families, students and staff from Gippsland Grammar. We were very grateful to our hospitable Bishop Richard for hosting us at Bishops Court later in the day for some Bible study, evening reflective time which was a Taizé-style service, and a relaxed evening meal.

On Monday morning we heard from Neil Bull from AIRS, who talked to us about insurance and risks for cathedrals, and gave a most engaging commentary and activity in which we had to correctly label the photos of each other's cathedrals. Only one of us accurately named each of the cathedrals!

We were grateful for the tour provided by local volunteers at the Art Gallery on Monday afternoon, the

current exhibition featuring Gippsland artist Frank Mesaric's work.

Throughout the conference, The Rev'd Dr Dean Spalding offered us Bible studies based on themes of hospitality in Luke's Gospel and the Book of Acts. Dean's characteristic polymathic approach entertained us as well as helped us to engage with deeper questions.

I'm deeply grateful to all who helped make the Conference come together, particularly Registrar Rae Riley and the Registry team, without whose support it wouldn't have happened. Also, thanks to the wonderful team at the Cathedral who made the Deans welcome. I've had some enthusiastic feedback, and the general consensus was that it had been a warm and welcoming experience.

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



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Thelma Langshaw Pilgrim on a new way

Thelma and Bishop Richard celebrating with Thelma's daughters
Kaycie (left) and Lauren (right)

■ Jan Down

Oh Lord, you have searched me
and known me.
You know when I sit down
and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from
far away...
For it was you who formed my
inward parts;
you knit me together in my
mother's womb.

Psalm 139: 1-2; 13

It was Thelma herself who chose Psalm 139 as the Bible reading for the service of thanksgiving for her ministry at St Paul's Cathedral on Sunday 2 August. And The Rev'd Lyndon Phillips, in her reflection, said that if she had been choosing the reading, that psalm would have been top of her list.

Thelma's choice in part, perhaps, stems from her nursing background – suggestive of her wonder and praise at the mysteries of the human body as created by God; and a thankfulness that God knows us intimately and loves us so much.

The Rev'd Thelma Langshaw was ordained Deacon in 1997 and Priest in 1999, both ordinations taking place in Gippsland. As Deacon, Thelma exercised pastoral leadership in the Episcopal Districts of Rosedale and Stratford, conducting services at Munro, Dargo, Briagolong, Kilmany and Stratford.

From 2001 to 2004, and again from

2009 until last year, she was the diocesan Chaplain of Mothers' Union. She was also chaplain for seven years at the Gippsland Base Hospital in Sale from 2002.

In 2009 Thelma became the parish priest at Omeo and continued in that role until her retirement in August this year.

Lyndon also mentioned Thelma's gift for music, relating how she had seen Thelma at Briagolong move 'from leading worship to dashing to the organ to supply our music and lead our singing, to then move again to celebrate Eucharist'.

Bishop Richard noted that Thelma has held a PTO (Permission to Officiate) in the

Gippsland Diocese for over 25 years, adding, 'And she wants me to renew it! Thelma, we salute you!'

Several people offered tributes to Thelma's ministry. Alison Burston, a church warden from Omeo, spoke briefly about the inclusiveness of Thelma's approach. Lyndon echoed this point, observing that Thelma 'sees God everywhere and in everyone'. She added that Thelma's desire for unity could be seen in her involvement with interdenominational groups such as KYB and World Day of Prayer.

Lindy Driver, Diocesan President of Mothers' Union, spoke directly to Thelma: 'You have been an inspiration of what is valued in MU; that is the caring, supporting, loving and teaching, all worked together with a life full of prayer. This you have shared with us, showed and taught us, time and time again.'

Thelma first served as Diocesan Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator for MU, then became Chaplain as well. Jan Misiurka worked with Thelma in MU for many years, including on the Executive.

She said Thelma had supported and guided the Executive, while 'her faith, generosity and love for MU have inspired and encouraged members'.

Jan also spoke of the annual St Barnabas Family Retreat held at The Abbey. When this began, Thelma and her daughters Lauren and Kaycie became its host family, staying on the island to support families, help with catering and assist wherever needed.

The Rev'd Heather Toms spoke mainly of Thelma's chaplaincy ministry in Sale and Omeo hospitals, honouring the way she has 'woven care into the fabric of community life – faithfully, steadily, and with a presence that made the ordinary sacred'. Heather noted the way Thelma had stood beside so many people, offering 'steadiness in crisis, companionship in sorrow'.

Lyndon in her homily identified Thelma as a pilgrim rather than a tourist, since a tourist is just out to enjoy the scenery, whereas a pilgrim walks with intention, alongside others and open to transformation.

There was an echo of this in Bishop Richard's blessing of Thelma at the end of the service:

Christ, whose feet still bear
the dust of roads and journeys,
and the marks of our humanity;
you call us out of doors, onto the path
once more.
Uphold this your servant Thelma
as she steps out in faith,
having fulfilled her ministries in Omeo,
and beyond...
Continue to fashion her, day by day,
in your image,
and restore us all as your pilgrim people,
whose journeying speaks good news
to others on the way.

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



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Community Resilience Mapping at St Paul's Cathedral

Participants and Friends of the Earth facilitators (front row) at the Community Resilience Mapping workshop

■ Jan Down

There was a buzz in the room, plenty of laughter and deep engagement, as people shared a wealth of knowledge and experience at the 'Community Resilience Mapping' workshop on 18 June at the Cathedral.

About 25 people (including a handful via Zoom) joined the workshop. Many were from Bishop-in-Council or the Registry, while others represented parishes or ACTinG, or were simply interested people.

Four young women – Kimmi, Skye, Tian and Anna – from the Act on Climate collective of Friends of the Earth facilitated the discussions with skill, sensitivity and enthusiasm. The purpose of community resilience mapping, we were told, is to help communities understand their challenges and strengths in a changing climate, which impacts they are most at risk from, and who is most

at risk, so that they can be prepared in advance for emergency situations.

We began with a full-group brainstorm of climate-related impacts for Gippsland and then selected four on which to focus: bush- or grassfires; extreme heat; ecosystems, biodiversity and health; and sea-level rise/flooding.

We then organised ourselves into three table groups – the fourth group being online. Across all groups, community members identified as most at risk were: outdoor workers (including farmers), isolated people, those with disabilities, young children and the aged, climate refugees, the uninsured, the homeless and those with limited finances.

One obvious strength across the churches was the anchoring that faith provides, and the care within Christian communities that reaches out beyond the doors of the church.

Several key actions emerged from the final whole-group brainstorm as starting points to developing resilience and preparing for disasters. Among these were determining how physical assets of churches can be

strengthened (such as installing a battery where a church already has solar panels); creating and updating phone/communication trees; advocating for climate adaptation in existing networks; sharing knowledge across the age groups; backing First Nations-led adaptation and preparedness initiatives; and creating a faculty for spiritual resilience.

Friends of the Earth later provided a full written report on the day, which is available on the ACTinG section of the Gippsland Anglicans website: www.gippslandanglicans.org.au/acting/prepare.

A list of resources was included at the end of the report, and an offer to support anyone who would like to facilitate Resilience Mapping in their own community – just email: Kimmi.bebendorf@foe.org.au.

Thanks to Friends of the Earth for a well-conducted workshop. Thanks also to the catering team at the Cathedral, who gave us lunch and then stayed on to provide afternoon tea for Bishop-in-Council afterwards.

You can also see a reflection on the workshop by Richard Gijsbers on page 7.

The Rev'd Bec Hayman has also written a response for the August ACTinG bulletin, available on the ACTinG Bulletins page of the Diocesan website.

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

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Coping with climate change

Thoughts arising from the Community Resilience Mapping workshop

■ Richard Gijsbers

I enjoy the stimulation when a group of us put our thoughts together on an issue of common concern. For me, the measure of a successful workshop goes beyond the conclusions of the day to the further thinking this engenders. Accordingly, my thoughts currently are running along the following lines:

First, climate change will fundamentally disrupt our lives over the coming years, a disruption that we will have to learn to live with. This will not be just a single event, more an ongoing cascade of traumatic change from fires to droughts to extreme weather.

Second, coping with these changes will require a 'whole of community' response. No single entity in the community can do this alone. Each player needs to play its part.

The challenge for the church, therefore, must be: 'What is our role in tackling this challenge?' Just as an eye cannot say to a hand, 'I do not need you', the church cannot say to the CFA, 'Step aside, we will do it'. We all have a role to play, complementing each other: the police, the Shire Council, the CFA, schools, shops, farmers, everyone. If one does not do its job properly, that does not mean we should abolish it; rather, we should hold them to account and work alongside them so that they know what their role is and can do it.

This presupposes that we (the local churches) know what our role is.

So, I come to my third point. I understand that research from Monash University demonstrated that communities with a strong spiritual dimension were much more resilient during emergencies than those without. I am not sure what they meant by 'spiritual dimension' or whether one religious

tradition is more protective than another. But they do recognise that there is this dimension in dealing with emergencies, and it certainly behoves the churches to work out what that is and how to cultivate it.

In his book *The Year of Our Lord 1943*, Alan Jacobs, of Baylor University in the USA, argued that, when it became clear that the Allies were going to win World War II, Christian intellectuals like CS Lewis, TS Eliot and others strove to lay the groundwork for a post-war society that was not built exclusively on the technological mindset that was emerging. The new world order needed a spiritual regeneration as well as an economic and industrial one.

Climate scientist Mike Hulme argues similarly that tackling climate change has become an issue that goes beyond realising that temperatures are increasing. For him, there is a danger on focusing just on the technological dimensions of the challenge, and he emphasises that there is a spiritual dimension that needs to be acknowledged as well. It is a dimension that takes us beyond the here and now, and beyond the frightening spectre of the unknown future. It is a perspective that includes hope and grace, meaning and purpose, and maybe also understanding of some sort.

I find this to be tantalising in that I know that the spiritual dimension is there, but I cannot yet put my finger on what it is and how to cultivate it. How

should we train our clergy for this role? What should we preach from our pulpits? What liturgical resources are required for communities that have been in the middle of a bushfire, are preparing for a flood, or are still recovering from the loss of their livelihood a year after the event? How do we build up the spiritual dimension of a community when only some of them are churchgoers? How does this perspective help when a community's major employer is closed so that it will not only recover, but will come out of the experience stronger and better?

When we as a church meet to discuss how to cultivate resilience in communities facing unknown and frightening change, it is not enough to talk just about adopting solar power, planting trees or helping fight bushfires. We must go deeper than that.

What that entails, I am not sure, but I do know that if the church does not make this a priority, no one else will. And if we do not find a way of including others in this exercise (other denominations, other religions, First Nation representatives), persuading our communities that we have this role and we know how to perform it, then we are just a clanging gong amid a lot of other noises in the debate that is going on.

Richard Gijsbers is Chair of the Diocesan Finance Committee.

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Warragul Anglican's worship team prepares for an exciting new season

L-R: Daniel Lowe (percussion), Robert Jacob (music leader), Melanie Nicholls (guitar), Coralie Esbert (voice) and Tania Trotter (voice)

■ Carol Monson

Warragul Anglican Church's music ministry continues to grow — not only in size, but in maturity, flexibility, and servant-hearted leadership — according to a recent report presented to Parish Council by Music Ministry Leader Robert Jacob.

The ministry, which supports worship during the church's 9:45am service, has quietly expanded over recent months with new members joining both the singing and sound desk teams. This growth has been especially valuable during a period where several regular team members have experienced extended absences for various reasons. Despite these challenges, the ministry has consistently maintained a full band, singers, and sound operation each week.

Robert noted that this has only been possible because of the humility

and generosity shown by team members who have willingly stepped up to serve more frequently. In his report, he reflected that the spirit of service within the team remains one of its greatest strengths.

Importantly, the report also highlighted the ministry's commitment to maintaining the distinctly Anglican understanding of music as an aid to worship rather than a performance. While some contemporary church traditions can unintentionally drift toward a concert-style culture, Warragul Anglican continues to place the focus firmly on congregational worship, prayer, scripture, and the proclamation of the gospel. Robert described the role of the music team as helping the congregation 'enter into worship' while ensuring 'the focus stays where it belongs'.

One particularly joyful development has been the introduction of dedicated leaders for children's action songs during services. This initiative helps support younger members of the congregation to actively participate in worship. A library of instructional videos has been created, demonstrating actions for children's songs — a resource already proving valuable to the wider team.

Looking ahead, the proposed introduction of a third Sunday service at Warragul Anglican Church, to accommodate the growth of the parish, presents both exciting opportunities and new challenges for the music ministry. Questions remain around how teams may be shared across services, whether some members may serve in multiple congregations, and whether different musical styles may emerge between services.

In preparation for this next season, the church plans to invite more people to consider joining the music and sound teams. Last year's invitation resulted in several new volunteers stepping forward, and leaders are hopeful this spirit of participation will continue.

Parish Council expressed gratitude for the faithful and often unseen work of the music ministry team. In many ways, the report painted a picture not simply of musicians and singers, but of a group of people quietly helping a congregation worship together week after week with excellence, humility, and joy.

Carol Monson is the TGA representative at Warragul.

Celebrating Stacey's Ministry

Warragul Anglican Church recently farewelled the always joyous 'Children's Ministry Leader' Stacey Kearney. Stacey is moving on to take a role in leading emerging leaders in the wider church.

In typical fashion Stacey's key statement in her farewell address was that 'Children's Ministry is not built on one person.' All the WAC activities Stacey has supported such as SALT Club, 'mainly music' and Wackies for grades 4 to 6, are successful because of the team that is committed to serving Jesus, continuing to grow its faith through asking questions, working together to share the

load and recognising that no-one is alone when they have faith in Jesus.

Vanessa Elbourne and The Rev'd Daniel Gebert farewelled Stacey and her family in front of a congregation that will miss her enthusiasm and passion for her faith in Christ.

Carol Monson is the TGA representative at Warragul.



Vanessa Elbourne, Stacey Kearney and The Rev'd Daniel Gebert

Iris Maxfield

A life of faith, connection and joy

11 February 1925 – 27 July 2026



Iris celebrating her 101st birthday earlier this year

■ John Webster

When Thomas asked Jesus, 'Lord, we don't know where you are going. How can we know the way?' Jesus answered, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.' Anyone who knew Iris Maxfield might easily imagine her nudging Thomas if she had been present at that exchange – because Iris always seemed to know the way, and was never shy about saying so, even to a Rector mid-service.

Born Iris Ellen Blanche Wilde at Swan Hill, Iris was the second daughter of Vera and Ernest 'Oscar' Wilde. Her childhood in Lalbert and Robinvale was shaped by hard work – hand-milking cows, bicycle milk deliveries before school, and a Leaving Certificate completed by correspondence. Those early years planted three threads that would weave through her whole life: family, faith, and teaching.

Family, for Iris, was never narrowly defined. She could find anyone with

a connection to the Mallee and count them as a friend for life, and that same instinct for connection followed her to Drouin, where she settled in 1948 to teach and where, in 1952, she married Colin Maxfield. Those who knew her in later years remember her stopping strangers in the street, welcoming newcomers after services, and drawing people into her circle of hospitality. Iris lived out the kingdom of God in exactly this way – connecting and reconnecting people, strengthening relationships, and being an important catalyst for others to connect with each other.

Faith anchored everything. Iris joined Christ Church Drouin on her first day in town and never really left – serving as Sunday School teacher, choir member, Lay Reader, and, with characteristic humility, cleaner of toilets and halls when needed. Her service reached beyond the parish: she served on

Bishop-in-Council and as a Synod representative, continuing to attend Synod as a visitor long after her formal role ended. Her love of family history also found a home in the church, where she added to the parish archives with documents and photographs of memories for future generations.

Teaching was Iris's third great vocation – paid and unpaid, secular and religious, spanning three generations of Drouin families. From one-teacher rural schools during the war years to remedial English at Drouin High School and, after retirement, voluntary religious instruction, she gave herself to the formation of children well past the age of 65.

Above all, those who loved her speak of her joy. Her granddaughter Kate remembered her as someone who could look at a dark, stormy cloud and still see beauty, and often heard her singing the hymn 'Joy is like the rain'. Even in her final years at Lyrebird Aged Care, as memory faded, that joy remained – a smile lighting her face during hymns, even when she said she could no longer see to read or hear the words.

Iris passed peacefully, ready, as Kate put it, 'to be reunited with Papa.' We can well imagine her crossing into the next life, pausing along the way because she's 'just spotted someone she knows' – and taking her place, as ever, welcoming others home.

Iris Maxfield's funeral service took place at Christ Church, Drouin on 31 July 2026.

The Ven John Webster is Rector at Drouin.



Iris attending a service at Christ Church, Drouin with her grandson Luke in 2023



Boyd House Emergency Relief Centre Opening

■ Sarah Gover

Bishop Richard with Anglicare staff Karin McLean, Michelle Taranto, Jane Kennard, Kim Tanto, Chris de Paiva and The Rev'd Sarah Gover

It was not so long ago that Boyd House, the community centre attached to the Parish of Morwell, was re-dedicated. Boyd House had been refurbished with the help of an Anglicare Victoria Parish Partnerships grant – a sign of the strong partnership, both historic and living, between the Diocese of Gippsland and Anglicare Victoria.

On 15 July, members of the Parish, Anglicare Victoria and the community gathered to celebrate the opening of the Boyd House Emergency Relief Centre. This is a concrete example of that continued partnership.

The Rev'd Sue Jaka was unable to attend the event but wrote:

I am delighted that this project serves the needs of local people who are struggling financially, with respect and in a way that engenders hope and possibility. I have been impressed by the multi-faceted approach, which seeks to go deeper than simply handing out a parcel of food or a voucher, and by the fact that the need for medicines and fuel for cars can also be addressed at Boyd House. It is great that financial counselling is offered to help people manage debt. In this Emergency Relief program, I am pleased that local people are valued as volunteers: people from within St Mary's church and people from the wider community are working together to make this a community where all people are valued and encouraged to live their best lives.



In his opening speech, Bishop Richard identified the often overlooked disconnect between structural disadvantage and public policy. He said:

The Kingdom of God that this project bears witness to, in word and action, is not a monoculture for the benefit of "insiders". It is a diverse community of radical inclusion, in which the last shall be first and the least shall be deemed greatest. So too, Anglicare Victoria envisions a community in which those who have never had the sort of legacy privileges that are so easily traded on politically are not branded as "lazy", but are afforded support and, with that, greater agency in their own lives. We may use different language at times, but our purposes at Anglicare Victoria and across the Diocese overlap: to extend dignity to all people.

These sentiments were echoed by the Anglicare Victoria managers who were present at the launch. Bishop Richard continued:

It's this partnership in a common vision that we celebrate, as much as the volunteers, the team leaders and the funding that make Emergency Relief possible here.

In the first eight weeks of operation, the Emergency Relief Centre distributed over seven thousand dollars in financial and material support and delivered 150 hours of service to the community from its 10 volunteers. Thanks were given to the volunteers who have been at the front line of this ministry of restoring human dignity.

The team at the Emergency Centre is looking forward to seeing this work grow, and warmly invite anyone wishing to donate, or simply learn more, to get in touch with Sarah.

The Rev'd Sarah Gover is the Parish Partnerships Coordinator for Gippsland.



Sarah Gover with volunteers Andrew Barry and Jenny Webb



The unshakeable Kingdom

– Alpha Leadership conference May 2026

The Royal Albert Hall, London

■ Graeme Liersch

Imagine being packed into a large auditorium with over 5,000 worshipping Christians. It is something that many dream of yet never experience. For me, this has been one of my dreams, that at last I was able to realise in May.

It was my privilege to represent the Diocese at the recent Alpha International Leadership Conference held at the Royal Albert Hall, London.

The conference ran for two days, with an opening talk by Nicky Gumbel and subsequent witness talks in the following morning sessions. Afternoon sessions on both days included workshops of your choice that were held in and around Holy Trinity Brompton and the Royal Albert Hall.

Alpha has truly been a wonderful tool born out of Holy Trinity Brompton and led by Nicky Gumbel. Key to the success of Alpha has been the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit and the willingness of lay people to lead and be involved.

For churches around the world, this has been a body of Christ event, that continues today.

The theme of Nicky's opening address was 'The Unshakeable Kingdom'.

He began by highlighting that nations are in uproar over current events and that we live in an anxious generation. The result of this anxiety is a combination of both loneliness and dispersion, a common element that the early church experienced.

And, as with the early church where Jesus had compassion on them and loved them, we were reminded that He loves us and knows each of us by name.

One challenge for us today is that identity questions are being asked of us. We were thus reminded that,

when we turn to Christ, we receive a Kingdom that cannot be shaken because it is built on a solid rock – Jesus.

This is opposed to the false rocks (gods), such as money, power (influence) and worship of self; all of which are nothing other than a puff of wind.

1 Peter 2:7 reminds us that Jesus Christ is the Rock, the cornerstone, that doesn't shake, and 'Rock' is a personal name for God.

Compare this to the world's rock that was rolled away on that first Easter morning.

Because Jesus is our Rock, we don't have to feel strong, for He holds us up and supplies all our needs, just as the Israelites' water needs were provided for in the wilderness.

Jesus understands you, so take the opportunity to figuratively drink from Him. He is the one who is building His church, He is the cornerstone and we are His living 'Rocks', good 'Rocks', and it is this good 'Rock' that keeps Nicky in his place.

The gate of Hell will not prevail on the church that is built on the 'Rock', and for this reason things are beginning to turn. Nicky shared that Gen Z are interested in faith and now, in many parts of the world, catholic worship is growing.

We are indeed part of an 'Unshakeable Kingdom'.

Following witness talks was most encouraging as we heard of people coming to faith in all parts of the world through using Alpha. From England to India, to Southeast Asia, South Africa, South America, Europe and Scandinavia, people spoke of how they had come to faith due to someone inviting them to an Alpha event.

Key to many of these people's conversions were two things:

1. God had already prompted them to listen.
2. It was a lay person who invited them.

Perhaps the most inspiring witness talk came from the then Prime Minister of Latvia – Evika Siliņa, who chose to forgo some important ministerial meetings to speak at the Conference. She reminded us that the real power we hold is the freedom to choose and to do it responsibly with the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. This is the stance she has taken while in government. She also stated that leadership is a lonely place that must be anchored in Jesus Christ, that power is not yours but God's, that we shouldn't make decisions out of fear and, as a leader, you need to make decisions for all kinds of people.

So, was the Alpha Conference a worthwhile experience? Yes. Worshipping with over 5,000 people was a time of a deep personal encounter with Christ, and inspiring.

Would I encourage others to go? Yes, absolutely.

Registrations are now open for next year's conference, scan the QR code for more information.



The Rev'd Graeme Liersch is Rector at Wonthaggi/Inverloch.

Keeping a Christian presence in the community

The story of St Thomas' Anglican Church in Toora, South Gippsland



1st stage of St Thomas', Toora, 1892–1910

■ John Waterhouse

What do you do as Christians in a small rural community when you have to close your church building and/or sell the church property because of declining numbers and declining resources needed to stay active and serve the community?

Like many rural parishes across Australia in the past generation, many Anglican Christians have faced this dilemma, and sadly, in most cases these churches closed and many still stand in the landscape as sad reminders of another age.

The new Archbishop of Melbourne, The Most Rev'd Dr Ric Thorpe, preached in May at the 2026 Synod Opening Service and spoke about this exact issue, relating to us stories of churches in inner London which had found some creative solutions to this challenge.

As it happens, the St Thomas' Anglican Church at Toora in South Gippsland had also faced this challenge a few years ago, and the Pastoral Worker for the Parish of Corner Inlet, Geoff Kennedy, gave a report at Synod about these new initiatives in Toora since 2023.

A changing community

The Toora Anglican Church had a long and vibrant history in this rich dairying country in Corner Inlet, south of the Strzelecki Ranges, beginning in 1892 when St Thomas' was built and licensed by the Bishop of Melbourne, Bishop Goe. Over the next 100 years,

the parish celebrated its work to God's glory on three occasions, in 1942 for its 50th, in 1967 for its 75th, and in 1992 for its 100th – and on each occasion prepared a publication highlighting this work and the faithful clergy and parishioners involved in it. And these highlights included 214 marriages in the church!

In fact, in the centenary publication in 1992 prepared by Neil Everitt, 'Faith, Hope and Lots of Charity', the book ended on a very upbeat note about its future, quoting Archdeacon Adeney's words at the 40th anniversary in 1932: 'Each anniversary should not be an ending but a stepping stone leading you up.'

Sadly, this future did not eventuate as hoped, and as early as 2000 – just eight years after the centenary celebrations – there was a major upheaval in the local community, as has happened in many rural communities over the past 50 years – the major local industry, and employer, closed. In Toora's case, it was the Bonlac Milk Factory which became insolvent, and 140 local people out of a population of 750 lost their primary source of income. There had been other dairy factories in various locations at Toora since 1893, until in 1950 the British United Dairies constructed the current large-scale milk factory complex – later known variously as Tooralac Milk, Unigate and finally Bonlac.

Not surprisingly, by 2011 the Toora population had reduced to almost half its 1950s population, with only just over 400 remaining. There was some reprieve in 2012 when ViPlus Dairy invested in upgrading the old factory to produce powdered milk for the local, Chinese and Middle Eastern markets, but that initially only employed 20 locals and 30 today. This dramatic change impacted all the local churches, of course, especially as so many young families had to leave Toora to obtain work.

St Thomas' Anglican Church had had to face some other issues during the 1980s leading up to the centenary in 1992, which were also warning signs of future problems – problems common to bush churches across the country which had been built in the 19th century from local materials and often on virgin country.

The parishes of Foster and Toora had combined into one parish in 1984, and the new parish was renamed the Parish of Corner Inlet in 1985. In 1986, extensive restoration of the Toora Church was recommended by the new wardens, a discussion that continued through to 1989 when the decision was made to demolish the 1892 church and build a new brick one with a steel frame, using funds from the sale of the old rectory earlier in 1989. However, after many protests, the decision was rescinded and the rectory money used instead to restore the old church in readiness for the centenary in 1992. This restoration involved many major projects, including re-roofing and re-blocking the church, and replacing all the internal timbers, including the ceiling.

A difficult decision

Fast forward 30 years to 2015 and the church was once again requiring major restoration work caused by subsidence at the site, and other serious structural issues. But by now, there was only a very small ageing congregation, no rectory funds to draw on, and even the property maintenance volunteers had retired. There was an active and successful Op Shop operating rent-free in a room attached to the local hotel since 1979 that provided up to



St Thomas' Anglican Outreach Centre

\$20,000 per annum for the church, but the facility was very small, dark and not suitable for any sort of pastoral ministry or drop-in centre.

And so, a possible solution was prepared and forwarded to the diocese for consideration and, hopefully, approval – sell the church property, including the church and the parish hall, and invest the funds in a shop-front outreach centre in the main street so that the local Anglican community could continue to have a public presence in Toora.

By 2022, permissions from the Gippsland Diocese, the support of Bishop Richard and the support of the Corner Inlet Parish, as well as the Toora church warden, had all been obtained, and the process of selling the St Thomas' church property and the subsequent purchase of a shop in Stanley St began in earnest.

The property sale was, in fact, completed by October 2022. The purchasing artist planned to use the church building as a gallery and live in the parish hall, so some of the pressing building work required on the church was less urgent.

Closing one chapter

The last church service in St Thomas' at Toora was held on Sunday, 6 November 2022, led by the Corner Inlet Parish Rector, The Rev'd Tim Fletcher, with 75 people in attendance. Tim and former rectors Neil Thompson and John Davies, along with the Toora warden Rachel Brown, also spoke and reminisced with the parishioners gathered.

Five days later, on Thursday, 10 November 2022, the service to deconsecrate and secularise the church was led by Bishop Richard,

130 years after The Rev'd Goe, Bishop of Melbourne, had licensed the building as a church on 5 December 1892.

In addition to these developments, Betty Light had offered her shop at 50 Stanley Street, Toora, for sale to the church, and the settlement for this property occurred soon after, on 23 January 2023. The 'St Thomas' Anglican Outreach Centre' sign was proudly installed above the shop soon after, and the old Op Shop prepared to move into its new premises after Easter.

Coral Raby was appointed as the first Op Shop manager, and she made her first report to Parish Council on 13 April 2023.

A new way of being church

Within five months of the closure of the church, the new venture was up and running with enthusiasm and hope – the house at the rear of 50 Stanley St had been leased, the Op Shop business was fully functioning, and the local Christian community as well as the Toora locals were strongly supporting the initiative. In fact, within a year,

the Op Shop had doubled its income from previous accounts.

By 2026, after three years of operation, the new venture has already expanded its services and outreach significantly, with many new initiatives added to the original vision to not only invite the local community into the centre but to reach out to it as well.

Geoff Kennedy was appointed as the first Pastoral Worker for the Outreach Centre in 2024, funded by the Op Shop, and he has since built a network of local contacts, including former parishioners at St Thomas', alerting him to people in need in Toora and surrounds as well as people coming to the centre seeking support.

A weekly church service is held in the Op Shop as well, including a 'cuppa & chat' time beforehand. And a number of local church traditions continue to operate through the centre, including Christmas Carols at the Toora swimming pool. In addition, extra funds generated by the Outreach Centre are used to support other ministries in the Gippsland Diocese, including Gippsland Diocese Aboriginal clergy, The Rev'd Kathy Dalton and The Rev'd Canon Aunty Phyllis Andy.

As those from the Corner Inlet Parish involved in this ministry have often commented, it is, in fact, a model of Christian presence in the Toora community similar to that of the earliest Christian house-churches across the Roman Empire during the first 300-plus years of the church's existence, long before there were any public church buildings.

John Waterhouse is the Communications Officer for the parish of Corner Inlet.



Inside Toora Op Shop



A Season of Reconciliation in Drouin

■ Libby Willems

Taking a leaf from the book of the Parish of Morwell, Drouin Parish has offered its first Season of Reconciliation this year to provide an environment to talk and learn together about Reconciliation Week and the act of reconciling with others.

An evening gathering was offered weekly for four weeks following National Reconciliation Week (27 May – 3 June) facilitated by Libby Willems, who provided publicly available video, audio and documentary prompts to cultivate thinking and discussion. The forum was free to attend and open to all in the community, and asked participants to take up a self-educating attitude using the suggested materials.

This series was well supported by the parish of Drouin, and the connections that were made with members of the Uniting Church were very encouraging. When we reflect on Drouin Anglican's growth in its reconciliation work, we acknowledge that it has taken a gentle approach and time. Each year we have invited our congregation to join in as they are able to, and each year, we build our skills, knowledge and confidence to lead reconciliation activities in the full acknowledgement that there is so much to do.

Across the four gatherings, the group discussed reconciliation at different degrees of proximity to Self:

Reconciliation in the Nation

We began with the Common Grace video *All In: Reciprocity as Reconciliation*. We remembered and read 'The Uluru

Statement From The Heart' and wondered about the unsuccessful Voice to Parliament referendum of 2023. We considered the diversity of First Nations across Australia and acknowledged that reconciliation actions will be unique to each community. We visited the Reconciliation Australia website and looked at their Reconciliation Barometer information sheets.

Reconciliation in Victoria

We looked at the work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission and its recommendations. We learned about its ten key findings that have acknowledged truths of the history of Victoria that continue to impact First Nations Peoples and all Victorian citizens. We watched a moving address by Australian First Nations TV journalist Narelda Jacobs who talks plainly about racism being 'a scourge that the privileged don't see and the media doesn't report' in her 2026 Reconciliation Week address.

Reconciliation in Gippsland

We remembered that Gippsland's history is not free from historic injustices. We discussed decisions in recent decades such as the renaming of the Monash Federal Electorate that had previously been named after Angus MacMillan, who has now been associated with massacre events in Gippsland. We made connections with people from the Uniting Church who have been actively working on reconciliation in their congregation. We discussed the work of Reconciliation Victoria working with

local governments to shift policy, and reconciliation in the education system.

Reconciliation in 'our home'

We watched a compelling short film on Jackson's Track and the experience of accessing healthcare for the Kurnai people. We used this to think about how reconciliation needs to happen at many levels and how corporations, through policy changes, can improve lives. We wondered about what we might continue to do together to support reconciliation in our West Gippsland location. We examined our own skills to reconcile with family and people we know.

Every single source was incredibly valuable material for our personal learning. Spending time together to learn and discuss deepened the experience for all.

This series has sprouted new opportunities for the Drouin Parish to continue to connect and grow in reconciliation with other local congregations from the Catholic and Uniting Churches.

Although the series was not framed as a Christian discussion, there were times when we were reminded of God's ultimate reconciliation with humans through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We were reminded that the essence of reconciliation is based in love, truth telling and truth hearing, and acknowledged how often we have fallen short of Jesus' example to us.

Libby Willems is the TGA representative at Drouin.



A weekend of work, welcome and quiet grace

■ Rae Riley

There are some places that seem to invite you to slow down the moment you arrive. The Abbey on Raymond Island is one of those places.

Recently, Cath welcomed a small group of volunteers to The Abbey for a weekend of fellowship, service and rest. Coming from a variety of Christian traditions, everyone found something deeply special in the rhythm, hospitality and spiritual beauty of the place. It was a gentle reminder that God often draws people together through simple acts of welcome and shared purpose.

On Saturday, we spent the day clearing the garden bed in front of the accommodation units, moving mulch and freshening the grounds. It was good, honest work, the kind that leaves you tired in the best possible way. By the end of the day, the difference was amazing. A little time, a few willing hands and a shared purpose had helped brighten a much-loved part of The Abbey so that others who visit can experience its beauty and peace.

But the weekend was about far more than gardening.

There were endless cups of tea, wonderful food, rich conversations, laughter, encouragement and the simple joy of being together. Ideas were shared, friendships deepened, and there was space simply to listen to one another. There were moments of stillness and quiet reflection, and the unexpected gift of hearing Cath play the harp. Sitting together, listening

to that beautiful music, it was easy to understand why The Abbey holds such a special place in the life of our Diocese. It is far more than a property or a retreat venue. It is a place of welcome, renewal and quiet grace.

Perhaps the greatest surprise was discovering that while we had come to give our time, we each left having received something in return. Service became fellowship. Work became worship. The conversations, the laughter, the shared meals and the peaceful surroundings renewed our spirits and strengthened friendships in ways none of us expected.

The Abbey is one of the treasures of our Gippsland Anglican community. It relies on practical help, willing hands and generous hearts, but it also has a remarkable way of giving back far more than it asks.

If you have ever thought

about volunteering at The Abbey, even for just one day, I encourage you to do so. One day can make a real difference to this beautiful place, to the many people who will come after you to enjoy its peace and beauty, and perhaps even to your own spiritual journey. Sometimes the greatest blessing isn't found in what we accomplish, but in the people we meet, the conversations we share, and the quiet ways God goes about restoring us while we are busy serving others. We certainly left with tired bodies, full hearts, and every intention of returning.

Rae Riley is the Registrar of the Diocese of Gippsland.

The Gippsland Anglican

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Transformative family experience

Boarding a home away from home



The Mekken family – Stella, Michael, Sharon, Cameron, Josh and Libby

Sending one child to boarding school is a significant decision for any family. For Sharon and Michael Mekken, it was a decision they would make four times.

Over more than a decade, all four of their children, Cameron, Josh, Stella and Libby, have called Gippsland Grammar's Blackwood House home. Remarkably, each sibling went on to become Boarding Captain, a reflection of the leadership qualities they developed through their boarding experience.

When Sharon first sent her eldest child away 10 years ago, it wasn't an easy decision. Like many parents living in regional Victoria, she wanted the best education possible for her children. But that meant letting go.

'There's a part of you as a mother that doesn't want to send your children away,' Sharon reflects. 'But we knew we needed to do what was best for their education.'

Living near Orbost, two hours east of Sale, Sharon and her husband were looking for a school that would challenge their children academically while providing a supportive environment where they could thrive. When their eldest son Cameron expressed an interest in studying medicine, they began considering boarding at Gippsland Grammar.

What started with one child soon became a family tradition that would open doors and create opportunities for all four children.

Now, as youngest daughter Libby prepares to finish Year 12 as a Prefect and 2026 Blackwood House Captain, Sharon is almost bursting with pride as she looks back on more than a decade of association with the School and can see just how transformative boarding has been for her family.

'It has helped shape our children in many ways,' she says. 'They are well-adjusted, independent young people. They're resilient, confident and able to navigate life's challenges.'

The success stories speak for themselves. Cameron (Class of 2019) is now a resident doctor working at Ballarat Base Hospital. Josh (Class of 2021) has completed a Commerce degree and works in Melbourne while studying towards his Chartered Accounting qualification. Stella (Class of 2024) is studying Speech Pathology at university, while Libby is preparing for her own next chapter, hoping to study a double degree in primary and secondary teaching.

Yet for the family, boarding has always been about much more than academic outcomes.

'Boarding life is honestly like a second family,' says Libby.

From shared dinners and late-night study sessions to weekend activities and annual traditions, she says it is the everyday moments that leave the biggest impression.

'The small moments turn into the memories that will stay with me from boarding.'

Like many boarders, Libby had to learn independence quickly. Keeping on top of routines, managing study commitments, doing her own washing and maintaining a clean room were all part of growing up.

'I've learned that I can be independent,' she says. 'I've learned that I am resilient when something goes wrong.'

Boarding often raises concerns about distance from family, but the Mekkens found the opposite. Rather than weakening family bonds, they believe the experience strengthened them.

The four siblings remain incredibly close and share a unique connection through their years at Gippsland Grammar.

For Libby, one of the biggest surprises was how quickly Gippsland Grammar became somewhere she belonged.

'The place that was once a scary new school is now a place where I have found great friends,' she says. 'I am grateful for all of my experiences ... in and out of the classroom, on campus and in the dining room at the boarding house, I am grateful for the friends and the memories I will cherish forever.'

As the last member of the Mekken family approaches graduation, there is naturally some sadness. But there is immense gratitude.

Sharon is full of praise for the Blackwood House staff, especially Head of Boarding Stuart Llewellyn, whose Gippsland Grammar journey began about the same time as the Mekkens.

Sharon says she wouldn't hesitate to recommend boarding to other families considering the option. She believes it helps young people develop into capable, self-sufficient adults ready for whatever comes next.

For the Mekken family, a difficult decision many years ago has become one of the best decisions they have ever made.

Looking back, Sharon says she would make the same decision again in a heartbeat.

'It's not always easy letting your children go,' she says. 'But watching them grow into confident, capable young adults has made it all worthwhile.'

The art of independent learning

A brand-new initiative focused on helping students make the most of study and revision is underway at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School, with the inaugural Independent Learning Communities (ILC) program now in progress.



Holly, Isabel and Isabella exploring their strengths during the 'Know Your Strengths' Introduction Module activity at the Warragul Campus

The Year 10 to 12 initiative is designed to build the skills, habits and mindsets that support students to become confident, self-directed learners. Through structured coaching, supportive relationships and intentional learning environments, students are guided through the five stages of the Learnership Cycle to better understand how they learn, allowing them to take greater ownership of their learning and approach their senior years with independence and purpose.

Led by the ILC Coordinators and supported by a team of Academic Coaches, the ILC sessions are tailored to each year level, with St Paul's values guiding the approach.

Year 10 students build foundational study skills, organisation strategies and independent learning habits, with a focus on 'Respect' for the learning process, their time and themselves as developing learners. Year 11 students further develop these skills through mentoring conversations and targeted support, focusing on 'Integrity' in their learning choices and accountability. Year 12 students refine their independence through focused study environments and guided reflection, with an emphasis on 'Wisdom' in decision-making and preparation for final assessments.

The program is grounded in the value of 'Compassion', with a design that supports every learner through a continuous and personalised approach. Across all year levels, Academic Coaches work closely with small groups of students, providing support to help them develop resilience, agency and positive learning habits in a compassionate and supportive environment.

The knowledge and resources within these ILC courses continue to be developed alongside students, ensuring the program remains responsive to their needs and supports their future success.

Small donations, big impact

Students at St Paul's Anglican Grammar School have demonstrated the power of kindness and community spirit, supporting local families through important food relief initiatives.

Across the Traralgon Campus, students collected more than 2,000 cans for the Rotary Club of Traralgon's annual *Give A Damn, Give A Can* appeal. Warragul Junior School students donated non-perishable food items to support Frankie's Community Kitchen's annual Food Drive, while the growing Drouin Junior School contributed 144.5 kilograms of rice to Frankie's Community Kitchen, enough to help provide more than 2,600 meals.

Working together towards a shared goal, students learned valuable lessons about compassion, generosity, and community responsibility.

These initiatives not only help stock local food relief services but also strengthen the connection between students and the wider community.

Through their collective efforts, students have shown that even small acts of kindness can create a meaningful impact.



St Paul's Traralgon Secondary School SRC students with Rotary representatives and the cans collected by students and staff

Photos from a flourishing future

■ By an anonymous time-traveller

The big changes started back in 2026. Churches inspired the communities around them when they started turning lawns into orchards and providing local food. Whole towns saw the need to be more resilient and ready for whatever comes. One thing led to another...



The Raymond Island ferry was converted to sail power before diesel became unaffordable and supply unreliable. The new ferry is so quiet!



The wildlife is coming back to our church garden. Birds, bees, butterflies – even a Gippsland Water Dragon!



'The leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.' (Rev. 22:2)

Branching out...

Now that you have a Prayer Tree – or even if you don't – are you interested in branching out?
What do you dream of for your church garden, to support biodiversity, nurture faith and care for creation?

 **Contact ACTinG if you'd like help to explore your ideas / implementation / funding:**
acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au
We have limited expertise, but boundless enthusiasm.

.....

Meanwhile, here are some links to get ideas flowing...



Plant a micro forest
<https://tinyurl.com/3uvfnswu>



Install a nesting box
<https://tinyurl.com/eck73uy9>



Create a bee habitat
<https://tinyurl.com/3hjdjn9a>



Start a share-garden scheme e.g.
www.lendandlend.com



What is regenerative gardening?
<https://tinyurl.com/4uhy8sw2>



There are market gardens around most Gippsland towns now and more mixed farms. We don't have to rely on food being transported long distances. And it's so fresh!



The Abbey September 2026

Bishop Richard with Rhondda Fisher, Ron Gwynn, Helen Gwynn and Noreta Baberton

■ Cath Connelly

With the passing of dear Fae Rossetti, long-term Raymond Island resident and heart of the community, it seems appropriate to write about the wonderful times here at The Abbey under the leadership of Abbot Laurie McIntyre.

Fr Laurie arrived at The Abbey in August 2009. He was the first leader of The Abbey helping facilitate the transition from A'Beckett Park (youth camp) to a Centre focusing on hospitality, spirituality and the environment.

The connection with Fae Rossetti? Fr Laurie was a man of great character. Those who were here at the time speak about how he drew people to him – a man of great charisma. A highly intelligent person, Laurie loved company and enjoyed such delights as wine-tasting nights and potluck dinners. His passion was to offer hospitality to all whom he met, flinging the door of The Abbey wide open to the Raymond Island community and beyond. There soon emerged people who were keen to support the work of all that was happening at The Abbey. These enthusiasts were eager to commit themselves to Abbey maintenance, gardening and fundraising.

Four women in particular formed a close friendship over this work and came to call themselves the Abbetts. Rhondda Fisher, Noreta Baberton, Helen Gwynn and Fae Rossetti spent many wonderful years supporting Laurie and the important work of offering this retreat Centre to the Raymond Island community. Helen, Noreta and Rhondda still speak in glowing terms about the experience of being the Abbetts.

In June this year, Bishop Richard was able to visit The Abbey and bless a plaque in memory of both Abbot Laurie and the transformation that he engendered in this place. It was a delight to have three of the Abbetts reunite for this important dedication. Fae was unable to attend but was very much with us in spirit...

The great work that Fr Laurie began continues at The Abbey. The doors remain open and the wider community is always welcome.

This is your place; come find a home here.

Save the date



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

SEPTEMBER

- 10 *Hush Quiet Day Sound of Music*
Facilitators: The Rev'd Sue Newcombe
and Cath Connelly
- 12 Abbey Feast

OCTOBER

- 3 2–4pm Blessing of the Pets
- 8 *Hush Day – Being Present in the In Between*
Facilitator: The Rev'd Gradwell Fredericks
- 9–11 Weekend Retreat:
Restoration of Relationships
Facilitator: Julia Fullarton
- 16–18 Weekend Retreat:
Zen and the Art of Lego
Facilitator: Grant Palmer
- 31 Clothes Swap day

NOVEMBER

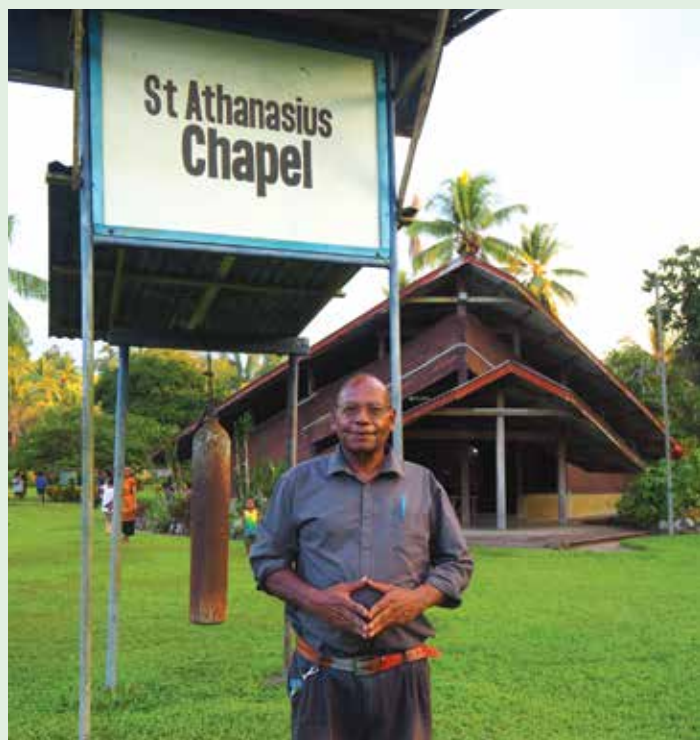
- 4–8 Mid-week retreat: Embodied Listening:
Awakening to the Spirit of Place
with earth, wind, fire & water
Facilitator: Susanna Pain
- 12 *Hush Day – My Heart in Hiding*
Stirred for a Bird
Facilitators: Grania Sheehan and
Cate North
- 16–19 Mid-week retreat:
'From here to eternity' - exploring the
practice of sacred image making
Facilitator: The Rev'd Moira Evers
- 20 Ecumenical Conversation
Hosts: Bishop Richard Treloar
and Bishop Greg Bennet

DECEMBER

- 10 *Hush Quiet Day:*
Australian Religious Poetry
Facilitator: Michael Fox

Details of all these events can be found
on our website www.theabbey.org.au

A glimpse of the Modawa Institute



Fr Manae standing next to the 'gong' that signals the rhythm of the day

■ Sarah Gover

I arrived at Modawa expecting to see a training college. I found that, but I also found much more: a community shaped by prayer, hard work, hope, and the very practical challenges of daily life in Papua New Guinea.

Modawa is home to the Bishop Newton School of Theology, the only Anglican theological training institute in PNG, alongside the growing David Hand School of Teaching and the yet-to-be-realised dream of a St Margaret School of Nursing and Community Health. It is a place where future priests, teachers, spouses, children, staff, and neighbours all share in a common life.

The rhythm of the day is marked by the sound of a gong. The first rings at 6am, though the birds have usually begun their own noisy chorus much earlier. A second gong calls the community to morning prayer; later gongs signal classes, meals, work, and evening prayer. In the chapel, prayers and readings from the PNG prayer book form the theological students and the wider community in the habits of worship and leadership.

Life at Modawa is simple and communal. Although there is water in tanks, and taps near the students' wooden homes, the families often prefer to take their washing to the river, then have a swim. The main food is what can be grown around the campus: bananas, taro, sweet potato, greens, eggplant, and beans. Some families grow extra food for hospitality or to help feed boarding students.

The culture of Papua New Guinea is conservative, and this is reflected in the church and in Modawa. Although one woman was enrolled in a theological subject, it is only the men who will be considered for ordination. The wives of theological students are involved in the life of the institute – worship, childcare, gardening, cooking, and Mothers' Union activities such as sewing. It would be great to see a targeted women's leadership program at Modawa for the students' wives, who become community leaders when they return to their communities.

Although Modawa has changed greatly over the last ten years, it remains fragile. The temptations of village and church life are not abstract. There is bribery, opportunism and greed everywhere, which erode good intentions.

There were also moments of simple joy. Thanks to Rotary and Australian schools, a recently arrived container of supplies was unpacked, and I helped Mothers' Union sort boxes of children's clothing, uniforms, and well over 100 purple T-shirts from the 2025 Geelong Summer Music School. Within hours those shirts were everywhere – on preschoolers, students, staff, and carpenters. I questioned the wisdom of sending padded winter jackets into 32-degree heat, until, on my last night, a television was set up outside for the State of Origin game. Over 60 children gathered on a tarpaulin as the temperature dropped to 24 degrees, and it felt cold – even the jackets I'd doubted were appreciated.

Modawa stands in a long Anglican missionary tradition in which evangelism, education, and health have belonged together, following the example of Jesus, who taught and healed. That threefold vision remains alive at Modawa, though incomplete: the theological school is essential, the teaching school is growing, and the dream of a nursing school still bubbles in the background. Alongside these, I would love to see training in economic and community development, especially for women, so families can lead in demonstrating transformative mission.

This first visit left me with gratitude, admiration, and many questions. Modawa is full of faith, resilience, humour, hard work, and vision – and it is also precarious. Buildings are unfinished, government promises not always kept, resources limited, and the pressures on leaders real. Yet in the gong that calls the community to prayer, in the gardens, the classrooms, the chapel, the sorting of clothes, I saw a place where God is at work forming people for service.

Modawa is a place of many stories, wonderful dreams, and real struggle against the pressures of culture, poverty, and history. Please continue to pray for Modawa, for its students, staff, and community. It needs our prayer, our attention, and our continuing companionship.

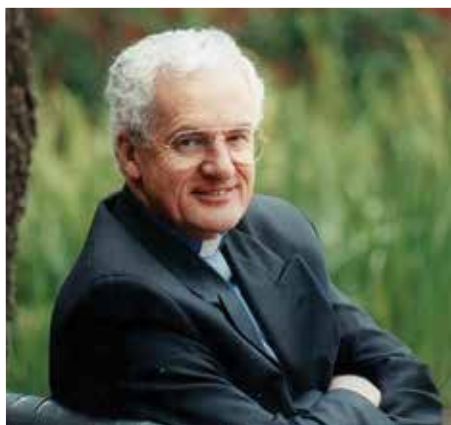
For more information visit: www.modawainstitute.org

The Rev'd Sarah Gover is the Parish Partnerships Coordinator for Gippsland.



The 2025 Geelong Summer Music School purple t-shirts being enjoyed by students

A partnership that became a legacy



VALE ALAN NICHOLS

■ Rowan Callick

Throughout his exceptional career as a journalist and then as a priest and an expert and administrator at major welfare and development agencies in Australia and internationally, Alan Nichols had a nose for desperate need – which often coincided with danger and bravery, and with God most miraculously at work.

Alan's remarkable life and ministry were remembered following his death earlier this year, with several hundred people gathering for his funeral at St Michael's, North Carlton, on 29 June. Among the many legacies celebrated that day was the deep and enduring connection he helped forge between the Anglican dioceses of Gippsland and Gahini in Rwanda.

The Rev'd Sarah Gover spoke at the funeral on behalf of the Diocese of Gippsland, reflecting on a partnership that began more than two decades ago and continues to connect parishes and communities across the two dioceses today.

Alan was born in 1937 in Sydney, started his working life as a cadet journalist with the Sydney Sun in 1953, then studied theology at Moore College and was ordained priest in 1962. He married Denise Jordan – who became a highly credentialled worker and administrator with leading Australian development agencies – and they had five children.

He became director of the Anglican Information Office, managed the publication of the Australian Prayer Book now in widespread use, and then moved with the family to Melbourne, where he became executive director of the Mission of St James and St John,

which eventually transformed into Anglicare. He was also president of the Victorian Council of Social Service, was Archdeacon of Melbourne, founded Anglican Overseas Aid with Archbishop David Penman and worked in Thailand with the Jesuit Refugee Service, including establishing connections with displaced Myanmar communities living on the border. He was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in 2006 and became Archdeacon Emeritus of Melbourne Diocese in 2013.

His response to the rapidly unfolding horror of the Rwandan genocide in mid-1994, when more than half a million people – mainly Tutsis – were killed and up to half a million women raped, was not to recoil but to reach out.

He travelled swiftly to Rwanda as a member of World Vision's executive team and became firm friends with Alexis Bilindabagabo, the first Tutsi bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Gahini in the east of the country, on the shores of vast Lake Muhazi.

In the mid-1990s, Alan Nichols – then working with World Vision Australia, leading its church engagement, and assistant priest at St John the Evangelist at Toorak in Melbourne – and his Rwandan church friends felt that the time was right to build a special partnership between an Australian diocese and Gahini.

He and The Rev'd Bilindabagabo travelled to several dioceses in Australia and decided that Gippsland was the ideal candidate for such a partnership – also mainly rural, and with a similar number of about 30 parishes.

The planning took some time, but in 2002, during a visit to Gahini, then Bishop Jeffrey Driver signed formal inter-diocesan documentation with Bishop Bilindabagabo. This was not intended as a short-term arrangement, but a long-term, genuine partnership.

The relationship between Gippsland and Gahini dioceses has continued to deepen since then, with many mutual exchanges.

The Rev'd Gover – Anglicare's Parish Partnership and Community Development Officer in Gippsland, and deacon in the Parish of Morwell – has been leading the engagement since 2015.

This has involved multiple programs, including parishes raising money for cows' artificial insemination in Rwanda,

the development of especially productive dairy cows with mixed Australian and African genes, including thanks to Gippsland vets travelling to share expertise with Rwandan counterparts, and with the health of families boosted by the more ready availability of quality milk. The Gahini diocesan emblem features such a cow.

Gippsland Water has become involved in the building of wells, youth groups have held exchanges, Year 12 school students have paid visits, and teachers have conducted professional development programs with Rwandan counterparts.

Every parish in Gippsland is partnered with a Gahini parish – with some building deep and intense connections, others inevitably less so.

The Rev'd Gover visited with a small group from Gippsland and beyond for the centenary of the Anglican Church in Rwanda in 2025 and posted back photos of events to Alan Nichols and his wife Denise. This triggered from Alan in return, she said, 'a flood of helpful memories of visits and connections, adding greatly to the conversations we had there'.

Alan Nichols visited Rwanda six more times after the genocide, including a confidential assignment on behalf of the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, to find five missing Anglican bishops there and make recommendations.

He wrote a book with Bishop Bilindabagabo on miracles during the Rwandan genocide, *Rescued by Angels*, which complemented his book on the extraordinary life of Stephen Than, Anglican Archbishop of Myanmar, *Dancing with Angels*. He became a trustee of the Barakabaho Foundation that Bishop Bilindabagabo had established for foster care and orphan support.

The Rev'd Gover noted at Alan's funeral service that he had been appointed a Canon of St John's Cathedral of Gahini Diocese, with a chair kept for him.

She said later that 'Alan's ministry, including his great commitment to social justice, is truly inspiring, and it has been a privilege for me to be following to one of those many places where his footsteps led'.

Rowan Callick is a Walkey Award-winning journalist and an examining chaplain in the Diocese of Melbourne.

From the Editor



After a short break so I could take some leave, it is lovely to be back with our September edition.

My family and I spent three weeks travelling up to the Northern Territory, many kilometres travelled and hours spent in the car, but well worth it when visiting gorgeous spots like Uluru, Finke River, walking the Kings Canyon Rim walk, and exploring new places. This time away with my family was much needed, forcing me to slow down and enjoy being present with the people who matter most.

Putting together this edition, I've been struck by just how diverse the stories within its pages are – and what a wonderful reflection it is of our Diocese.

A community of many stories



Visiting the St Peter & St Paul Catholic Church (underground) at Coober Pedy

Within this edition there are stories of communities and churches finding new ways to be present and serve the people around them. We explore climate change and what it means to build resilient communities, including the particular role our parishes might play. We continue important conversations around reconciliation and our relationships with First Nations people.

Our connections also stretch well beyond Gippsland. This month we travel, through the stories of others, to Modawa in Papua New Guinea and Gahini in Rwanda – reminders that we are part of a much wider Anglican family and that relationships formed across cultures and continents can enrich us all.

We also celebrate people – those faithfully serving today and those whose lives and ministries have left a lasting legacy. These stories remind us that people are the life of our Diocese.

Perhaps that is what I've enjoyed most about bringing this edition together. There isn't one single story that defines who we are. We are diverse, we care about our environment, our neighbours and our history, while we also look beyond ourselves to the wider world.

What a wonderfully diverse community we are.

I hope you enjoy this month's edition.

Krista Mountford

Reply to Letter to the Editor (‘TGA needs policy on AI’ – July, 2026)

Dear Jan,

Thank you for taking the time to write about your concerns and questions regarding AI and the use of it in *TGA*. I think there are some really important questions here, particularly around the environmental impact of AI, and ensuring that *TGA* contains authentic voices and stories. We have not discussed this as a *TGA* editorial committee, but it is a conversation we will need to have.

My knowledge around the environmental aspect of AI is limited although I recognise the energy and water required to support rapidly expanding AI infrastructure is something we should be conscious of. So, I would love to take some time to learn more, and I will contact some local organisations that are knowledgeable in areas of sustainability/the environment and share some information in a future edition of *TGA*.

At the same time, I think there is an important distinction to be made

between using AI to generate an article or opinion versus using it as a tool to support administrative work (such as someone submitting an article that is in their own words but has been checked for spelling and punctuation by AI), and this is where things become blurred.

I am cautious about publishing material substantially written by AI and presenting it as the work of an individual. *TGA* and its importance in our community is based around the authentic voices we share, and I don't want us to lose that. If AI has played a substantial role in generating an article, rather than simply assisting with editing, I think transparency is worth considering. Although your questions were focused on the environmental impacts, I also wanted to mention this as it could form part of a future policy.

I think a broader discussion in the pages of *TGA* could be a worthwhile way to explore those questions before settling on a policy as we value the thoughts of our readership and community, so I welcome anyone who has an opinion to email me: editor@gippslandanglicans.org.au.



The caring, highly experienced and qualified team at Latrobe Valley Funeral Services have been servicing the Latrobe Valley community and greater Gippsland area for over 70 years. Providing a caring environment and personal touch to accommodate each individual's needs in remembering your loved ones.

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(03) 5174 2258

BETTY AND MICHAEL PHILLIPS ESTATE

WOMBAT HILL *Grants*

APPLICATIONS OPEN SEP 1 AND CLOSE SEP 30

Mental health and well-being in Christian ministry are paramount in order to carry out the heavy loads that many ordained and lay ministry agents encounter on a day-to-day basis.

Having somewhere to retreat to was essential in Jesus' ministry.

A bequest has been established in the memory of Betty & Michael Phillips.

Grants are for Gippsland residents, for Christians and are non-denominational.

Grants are available for recipients to go on restorative spiritual retreats.

The Betty and Michael Phillips' Bequest
AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITIES FOUNDATION

Facilitated by:
<https://www.communityfoundation.org.au/>

For more information/applications contact:
Fred Wright 0412963310 or wombathill@gmail.com




Called to Care online study groups

ACTinG offers three online study sessions on *Called to Care*:
For People and Planet by Jo Knight

7:30pm Tuesday evenings
1, 15 and 29 September
For more info and to register,
email:
acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au

Join Us for a Family Worship
God is generous - so let's be grateful, not grumpy.
Exodus 16:2-15

St Mary's Anglican Church
6-8 Latrobe St Morwell
September 20 4:30pm



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

For more info call Sarah on 0430082865

These Regional Family Services will be monthly, on the 3rd Sunday.
September's service will be at St James Anglican Church, Traralgon, 18 October 4:30

EVENTS

1 SEPTEMBER – 4 OCTOBER Season of Creation

SEPTEMBER

- 1, 15, 29 7:30pm: online study sessions on *Called to Care*
To receive the Zoom link or find out more,
email: acting@gippslandanglicans.org.au
- 8 7.30pm: Induction of The Rev'd Damien King
as Priest-in-Charge of Yarram
- 10 10:00am – 12noon: Mothers' Union Celebration
Traralgon
- 11 2:00pm: Thanksgiving Service for The Rev'd
Canon Graeme MacRobb, St Paul's Warragul
- 12 12noon: Abbey Feast
- 22 10:00am – 12noon: Mothers' Union Celebration
Sale



GIPPSLAND ANGLICANS

Youth Ministry Catchup

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

First Tuesday each month, 7:30pm at: tinyurl.com/GIPPSYOUTH
For more info contact daniel@warragulanglican.org.au



Have your say in TGA!

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

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



Living Water

Season of Creation 2026

Immersion in Living Water
EZEKIEL 47:9, 12

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

Together in Song 585

- 1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast.’
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary and worn and sad;
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.
- 2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink and live.’
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.
- 3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘I am this dark world’s light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright.’
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I’ll walk,
till travelling days are done.

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Jamie Cooper on Unsplash

The Gippsland Anglican

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