

MIAmia

AUTUMN 2021

ANGLICAN
MOTHERS UNION
AUSTRALIA



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Vision: Our vision is of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

Mission: Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life.

The PURPOSE of Mothers' Union is to be especially concerned with all that strengthens and preserves marriage and Christian family life.

Its AIM is the advancement of the Christian religion in the sphere of marriage and family life.

Its FIVE OBJECTS are:

1. To uphold Christ's teaching on the nature of marriage and to promote its wider understanding.
2. To encourage parents to bring up their children in the faith and life of the church.
3. To maintain a worldwide fellowship of Christians united in prayer, worship and service.
4. To promote conditions in society favourable to stable family life and the protection of children.
5. To help those whose family life has met with adversity.

Mia Mia

A quarterly magazine of Anglican Mothers Union Australia.
Mia Mia is an aboriginal word for 'home'.

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Have your say in Mia Mia

Suggestions, comments, contributions and insights are welcome.

Please send all correspondence to the editor.

Publication in *Mia Mia* is at the editor's discretion.

Theme for next issue:
Fellowship-serving and supporting the Body of Christ.

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9th April 2021

Meet Our Contributors



BARBARA BIGGINS, OAM CF is the Honorary CEO, Australian Council on Children and the Media, and longtime advocate for children's right to quality media, and healthy use of screens. Her service to ACCM, plus with the Classification Review Board, ABC Advisory Council, and Children's Program Committee (ABT) has seen her awarded an Order of Australia and a Churchill Fellowship. Barbara was also named South Australia's Senior Australian of the Year in 2004.



REV'D TINEKE DEKKERS grew up in rural NSW in a Christian family. She has never known a time when she didn't know Jesus as her friend, however she made the decision to accept Him as her Lord and Saviour at 12 years of age. She trained as a Preschool teacher, a job she loved and which took her to the city, the country and the UK. After studying at Sydney Missionary and Bible College, Tineke moved to Inverell, in the Diocese of Armidale, where she loves serving as Pastoral Worker in the parish as well as School Chaplain/Welfare at a local Primary School. To relax she enjoys gardening (with the company of her chooks), reading novels and embroidery.



KAYE HEALY is well-known to AMUA members, having served as an Australian Vice President and in various other roles. Currently she is the Perth Diocesan President. After a long career as a primary teacher, Kaye now runs a tutoring service, assisting children who are experiencing difficulty in developing literacy skills. Kaye is married to Rob, and they are the parents of three adult children and in-law of one. In her spare time Kaye enjoys gardening and cross-stitch.



AMANDA KYNGDON lives in Newman, a mining town in the Pilbara region of W.A., where it's hot, remote and has a very mobile population. Amanda and her husband, Roger, are the busy parents of four young children, and serve the Anglican church with the support of the Bush Church Aid Society (BCA).



REV'D KIM THOMAS was born in Birmingham in the UK, moving frequently during her childhood and youth, which makes the question 'where are you from?' an issue. Kim came to know Jesus in her early 30s and her life changed from that day. She has worked as a Police Officer, Funeral Arranger and Parish Priest and is now a School Chaplain. Kim has a son, daughter-in-law and three beautiful grandchildren in the UK. She has lived in Australia for 4 years and is a keen motorcyclist and scuba diver.



MURIEL VAN TWEST joined Mothers Union in 1974, following the example of her mother and grand-mother. In 1990, looking for ways to support her local church financially, she began thinking about the possibility of writing a story for children. Ultimately, this became the story of a lost dog, a homeless man and a generous-hearted boy. In this issue of *Mia Mia* she reflects on the background to this story, *Rain Dog*.

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From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to our first issue of *Mia Mia* for 2021. In this issue our focus is on *children are a heritage from the Lord*, and there is much food for thought, and action, in the various articles. Since we are also looking forward to the celebration of Easter, I have included a number of "Thoughts" from various authors to help readers prepare for this most significant event in the Christian calendar.

AMUA members are a very interesting and creative bunch! We often see the results of hours spent by members in knitting, crocheting and sewing for others. In this issue we also hear how Muriel van Twest, writing as Sybil Rowlands, came to write a story for children about a boy, a dog and their care for a man who found himself homeless. Kaye Healy writes about the importance of reading aloud to children of any age, Amanda Kyngdon gives us some ideas on how older people can support parents of young children, especially in church, and Kim Thomas and Tineke Dekkers share their joy in ministering to children and young people. As if that weren't enough, we learn what AMUA members are doing in their patch, and our regular contributors share their thoughts on the theme.

I trust that you find much in this issue to enlighten and encourage you as you seek to fulfill our vision "of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships."

Happy reading!

Christine

MIA MIA is available on CD

When your eyesight starts to diminish all is not lost!

All articles in the *Mia Mia* magazine are faithfully recorded for your entertainment and enjoyment. All you need is a small CD player and MU news from around Australia will be at your fingertips.

For further information contact your Branch Treasurer.



A Word from Our President

A Gift Of Love

Last year we purchased a new TV – a 'smart' one – which enables us to look at current programs, to replay programs, to access movies and 'binge' on TV series. The trouble is, I'm not much good with all the buttons on the remote, so we don't see much more than what's on the "Guide". (I remember, with horror, how Scarlett, then aged 15 months, navigated her Mum's ipad to play a children's game!)

One night, just before Christmas, I dropped the remote, and in my scramble to catch it, I pressed something, and on the screen appeared the MU logo, saying "the service will begin in a few moments". I have no idea what I pressed, but Rob and I were able to watch the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols led by MU members across the world. I can only think that I was not in charge of the remote that night – divine intervention?

Since then, I've discovered YouTube on our TV and I've been following Morning Prayer (one day late) from Canterbury Cathedral led by Dean Robert Willis, often surrounded by cats, chooks, turkeys or pigs, in the currently chilly and frosty Deanery Garden (while in Melbourne today it is 40°!). His gentle presentation and prayerful insights are encouraging, as he speaks to people around the world who are in various stages of COVID-19 lockdowns, reminding us of God's presence and God's love for all.

Last week, two families received a gift of love from you. These two families, including five children, were able to have a holiday thanks to your generosity through the AMUA Disaster Relief Fund. On the advice of DPs, Dioceses affected by the horrendous bushfires last summer were invited to apply for a grant to help families and communities rebuild hope and confidence after the traumas that they had experienced. Because of COVID-19 restrictions, it's taken a while to organize, but now it's happened!

This gift of love has given two families a fresh start and something to look back on with joy

From the Publication Department

The Department's plan to slim down our stock to include AMUA products only is gradually being met, but we still have boxed cards, birthday cards and cards for special occasions as well as those to say thank you, sympathy, thinking of you, plus blank cards for your own message. Notelets and stationery packs with Australian flowers always make a good gift for a friend, as do bookmarks with a Christian message. We also have a variety of tea towels in stock, so check with your Publication Rep to see the catalogue and to order what you need.

AMUA Baptism Kits, Marriage Kits, Long Service Certificates and a wide variety of Badges and AMUA cards are available. There are a number of books still available – check the catalogue and if the book is still available, it's yours – discount still applies.

Do you need something for a Speaker's Gift, or special event? AMUA cups, tea-spoons, paté knives and cake-forks are available, as are AMUA key-rings, pens, and lanyards. There are still 2021 diaries and calendars available, useful now that we can make plans!

Rob Kennedy



and happiness. The traumas of the bushfires will hopefully fade a little in the minds of the young children, and they will be able to remember the fun they had with their respective families on holiday. Their stay on Raymond Island in Gippsland was facilitated by MU Gippsland, who provided the personnel to ensure the holiday was stress-free, and well catered for. Thank you to the facilitators for your love and care of these families and also to you, the members, who provided the funding.

But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and don't try to stop them! People who are like these children belong to God's kingdom." Matthew 19:14 CEV

Anne Kennedy



Attribution: Vidar Nordli Mathisen on Unsplash

Prayer

Almighty God, you have conquered death through your dearly beloved Son Jesus Christ and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: grant us by your grace to set our minds on things above, so that by your continual help our whole life may be transformed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the holy Spirit in everlasting glory. Amen

(BCP, Easter Day)



Prodigals and Those Who Love Them

We always have such high hopes for our children and do all we can to see that they have the best possible start to life. And it's not just education. We are also hoping that they will be kind, loving, strong and honourable. and if we are Christians, our fervent hope and prayer is that they will walk with the Lord and belong to him.

But what if they disappoint us badly?

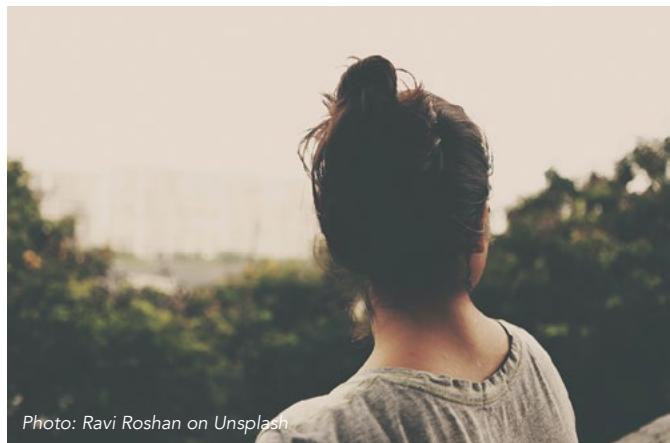
Many of us have had the experience of seeing children, especially in their teenage years, become quite rebellious. That has always been the case of course, but rebellious teenagers in today's world can so often get into very big trouble through bad relationships, the internet, substance abuse, illegal driving and so much more, including things you never imagined they would do. Our hearts break and we wonder, "What have we done wrong?", "How have we failed them?", "What should we do now?". We can feel guilty and as though living in a world out of control; as though we are waiting for a bomb to explode.

Over the years I have observed that many Christian families experience this (and the subject is close to home for me as well!). None of us are perfect parents, and we also have to acknowledge that such things as personality and choice come into this. It is interesting to see that you can have a family in which some children are 'outstanding' and others 'stand out' (so to speak!).

Spiritually, there are three major things for us to remember:

First, God does not stop being in charge.

Jesus tells us that our heavenly Father cares for the birds and feeds them (Luke 12:24). He is in charge and in control of the world. Even when you cannot see your wayward son or daughter, and have no idea what they are doing, the Lord can. He knows and he cares and he is in charge.



I always remember that the text at our wedding was this: 'In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose' (Romans 8:28). It does not mean that we will be spared all pain and grief. But it does mean that even pain and grief can be taken and used by God for his good purposes and we can trust him for the end result.

Second, we must keep praying for all our children and grandchildren at whatever age, that the Lord would keep them, help them to be wise, and above all, help them to trust him and live for him.

I was personally so helped in this by a friend who told me the story of St Augustine. Despite being raised by a Christian mother, Augustine turned his back on God and lived for himself as a young adult. He also embraced a heresy. His mother, Monica, went to see a bishop to ask him to speak with her son, and the bishop, moved by her pleas, said to her 'The son of these tears of yours will not perish'. How true this was!

The prayers of grandparents, godparents and kind friends are so significant. It is a great blessing to know that others are praying for our prodigal. In turn, it is important that we pray for our friends and family when they also go through difficult times. The Lord hears, and we can trust him to bring the prodigal home in the end, even if we do not see it in our own lifetime.

— Recipe — **FAMILY FAVOURITES**

Recipes and fond memories from our Executive members

CHOCOLATE PUDDING

From Robin Ray

"Now a standard family recipe that is not only valued across the family generations, but also a favourite of young people who attended the camps my husband ran when he was the Youth Officer in Brisbane Diocese (I cooked for the camps at Halse Lodge at Noosa), fondly known as Choccie Pudd!

Can be made in a casserole for 4-6 or in a large metal catering tray for 80 plus."

INGREDIENTS:

2oz butter
1/2 cup sugar
1 egg
2 dessert spoons cocoa
Splash vanilla essence
1 cup SR flour
1/2 cup milk

For the sauce:

1/2 cup sugar
2 dessert spoons cocoa
1.5 cups hot water

METHOD:

- Cream butter and sugar, add unbeaten egg and vanilla. Mix well.
- Fold in sifted flour and cocoa alternately with milk. Pour mixture into a greased/non-stick oven proof dish.
- Mix sauce ingredients, gently pour over pudding mixture, pouring over the back of a large spoon.
- Bake in moderate oven 35-40 mins.



Prayer

Almighty God and heavenly Father, your Son Jesus Christ shared at Nazareth the life of an earthly home. Bless our homes, we pray, that parents and children may be bound to each other by mutual love and honour, and come to a knowledge of your love for them, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

APBA, p.96



Jesus said, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me'

Our ancestors, the Hebrews, developed a quite wonderful theology of Creation. Set out in the first chapter of Genesis, it reads like a poem-lyrical, full of excitement and praise and wonder. It acknowledges that GOD is the Creator of the earth, the skies, the sea, the living things on the earth and in the sea – and of humankind. Genesis 1 describes an extraordinary relationship between the Creator and the Created – IT IS GOOD.

The understanding about God and Creation is that under God WE are all connected, all part of the created whole and just to make it very clear, human beings, our first parents, are made both from the earth AND in the image and likeness of God. We are earthly and godly together. We know that from the extraordinary feats we as human beings have accomplished. It is not just the skills of husbandry or erecting monuments but the depths of spirituality evident in the lives and writings and witness of holy men and women in every age.

And it is also evident in the down-to-earth functions of people of every race and nation. Our ancestors have dealt with the wonders of the human race, its pro-creative powers, the mortality of the body, the functioning of society and the love and the enmity between US – men vs women, children vs parents, tribe against tribe.

Generations have struggled, and will continue to struggle, with human nature and its propensity to rule, construct and order society and family life and to deal with its anomalies. The Hebrew biblical narratives give a truthful account by reporting not just success but also the ways in which life is not always easy. Brothers don't get on, women are barren, there is adultery, rape, child sacrifice, passions run high, jealousy... The frailty of our human condition is ever-present but saving grace abounds in the knowledge that God is the Creator. If he made us and it is good, then he loves us all — barren, jealous, crippled, cruel, faithful, weak, happy.

Photo: Kelli McClintock on Unsplash



This fact seemed to have been missed by Jesus's disciples when they rebuked (sternly told off) folk for bringing their children for Jesus to touch them. Mind you, these were not folk who were used to having young children running around under foot. They would have been horrified to even be near a small being. They were, after all, disgusting, unclean! And the Jewish male needed to be ritually clean.

Our Lord Jesus 'suffered' (encouraged) the little children to come him. Mark tells us he was 'indignant' and ordered that the children be brought to him. He was prepared to render himself ritually unclean in order to bless them. True suffering indeed. By taking the children in his arms and blessing Jesus restores the godly inheritance of Eden where all flesh is hallowed.

This Christian Scripture has been useful in promoting the needs of children, certainly within Mothers' Union as it worked against child exploitation in the 19th and early 20th centuries. A 1950s Australian Sunday School poster shows Jesus with all the little children of the world. In the Western world today Jesus' suffering the little

An African mother's prayer for her children

children has no shock factor. Jesus will have taken on the role of today's dad in a nice story about how lovely it is having children and Jesus blessing them instead of a radical defiance of social norms. Having a family is a wonderful adventure in living, but life is not clean and cosy for many of the world's children as those of us who pray with Mothers' Union Worldwide know. An article in *Church Times* reports that the sexual exploitation of children is rising because of poverty and isolation during the pandemic.¹

Closer to home in Australia, the plight of many children whose parents are ill prepared to look after them is dire. The plight of children in child protection is dire. Every child deserves tender, loving touch, every child deserves to be loved for who they are, no matter how ratty or undisciplined. Every child deserves someone there for them who knows what happened yesterday.

There is a policy in South Australia that children born to women in prison are taken away at birth. It is my prayer that this policy be amended. May the creative power of God empower us to rebuke that policy as Jesus rebuked those who kept children away from Him.

Lesley McLean

1. 11 December 2020, p.10

Prayer

Father, your Son, Jesus Christ, wrought our redemption by shedding his blood for us. Watch over us always and keep us in your love. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen)

APBA, p.205

Now the children are asleep, my Lord. I am tired and would spend a half hour in stillness with Thee. I want to bathe my soul in thy infinity, like the workingmen who plunge into the surf to shed the dust and sweat of their labours. Let my burning heart feel thy ever-renewing power; let my clouded spirit be lost in the crystal clarity of thy wisdom; heal my unworthy love in the waters of thy love which is so true, steady and deep.

O Lord, I couldn't stand being a mother one more day if I thought I had to account for all my faults. I am all sin. My love walks over my wisdom. But I love my children. I know that their little seeing eyes see through me, right to my soul, that they imitate me. Help me, O Lord, to be good in the deepest of my intentions, good in all my desires. Make of me what I wish my children to be, with a heart that is strong, true and great.

Help me not to be annoyed by the little things. Give me the large view of things, a sense of proportion so that I can truly judge what is important and what is not. Lend me strength to be a real mother to my children, knowing how to turn right their souls and their imagination, knowing how to help them to unfold their dreams and care for their bodies.

Guard them against evil and let them grow up healthy and pure. This I ask in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Amen

Author unknown





Food For All

Recently I watched a cartoon movie with my grandchildren in which a caveman and his family hunted for food which was then ripped apart and devoured quickly. Unfortunately, when it came to the father's turn there was no food left. He shrugged philosophically and said 'It's OK. I ate yesterday.' It was meant to be funny and everyone dutifully laughed.

But this is no laughing matter. It is happening right here in our country every day. People are going without meals because they cannot afford enough food. Absence of game may have contributed to the caveman's difficulties, but no such problem exists in our society. There is food for all, and in fact many of us are well and truly overfed.

Hunger in our society can be attributed to growing inequality and uneven distribution of resources; an attitude of meanness towards those who are in need. Many see unemployed people as lazy, the aged and disabled as commodities to be used for profit, and families living in poverty as invisible. We stand ready to condemn Hitler for marking Jewish people with yellow stars, but see nothing wrong with marking welfare recipients with income management cards to make them stand out in the community for all to see.



"The back of the card is bright purple, so every time I use it, I feel like the cashier knows I'm unemployed."

Income management cards are a direct attack on the dignity and personal freedom of welfare recipients who are deemed to be irresponsible with budgeting. The cards are distributed to all who live in a particular post code area, without any attempt to ascertain the circumstances of the recipients. How can your post code be an indicator of whether or not you need income management?

These cards often cause additional hardships because participants cannot use those funds to buy discount or second-hand goods, fruit and vegetables from market stalls and cheaper medication and equipment via the internet. More than 75% of requests to exit from the scheme are denied. Costs of running this scheme are considerable and are passed on to the taxpayer, whereas healthy profits flow to companies which administer the scheme.

ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie said: "The cashless debit card is designed to control people on low incomes just because they haven't been able to find a job. It is grossly unfair, impractical, demeaning, unproven and expensive."

Although the reasons for the introduction of this scheme may have been well-meaning, the evaluations conducted so far do not demonstrate that cashless debit is universally helpful. In fact, in most cases the scheme has been shown to provide little benefit and often causes more harm than good. Instead of forcing people onto cashless debit cards, we need our political leaders to act to increase benefits (Jobseeker) and better fund employment services to help people find paid work. Income management should only be used in individual cases where there is a likelihood of benefit to that individual, not used universally as a punishment for being poor in a particular post

code area. Unemployment benefits have not been increased in real terms for 25 years. Those unable to find work are left with a feeling of hopelessness, locked into a spiral of debt and deprivation that makes it much harder to get paid work.

Poverty is a very real problem in our society and the causes are many and complex. It will not be easily solved but perhaps a change in attitude and an increase in benefits would be a step in the right direction.

Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honours God. Psalm 14:31

Susan Skowronski

A Prayer for Generosity

Ever-loving God,

In Jesus you fed those who hung on his words of your generosity and love,

In Jesus, the poor were honoured and the rich sent empty away.

Hear our prayers for those who administer the social services in our land.

Grant them generosity and understanding of those who are needy.

May all your people follow the example of Jesus and seek to lift up the shamed and downcast.

We offer these prayers in honour of your holy name, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

Amen.

Lesley McLean

Some thoughts on the Cross

"The cross is the crystallised love of God."

Toyohiko Kagawa

"The cross should be enough to break the hardest heart and melt the iciest"

John Stott

"He came to pay a debt He didn't owe because we owed a debt we couldn't pay."

Author Unknown

"Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath shaken-
It went up single, echoless,
'My God, I am forsaken!'
It went up from the Holy's
lips amid His lost creation,

That, of the lost, no son should hear
should hear those words of desolation"

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

...and on the Resurrection

"When I go down to the grave, I can say like so many others that I have finished my day's work; but I cannot say that I have finished my life. Another day's work will begin the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley-it's a thoroughfare. It closes with the twilight to open the dawn."

Victor Hugo

"Our old history ends with the Cross; our new history begins with the resurrection."

Watchman Nee

"Indeed, taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the Resurrection of Christ."

B. F. Westcott



Cultivating a Ministry of Presence

Sometimes when we become too caught up in the business of life or our own understanding of faith, with its experience and expectations, we miss opportunities to connect with the generations that come after us. Psalm 127:3 states that "Children are a heritage from the Lord." Continuing our focus on the theme of hope, the next generation and their children bring hope for now and the future.

However, we could be more proactive in connecting with modern families in less structured, perhaps less obtrusive ways, through a 'ministry of presence.' Modern families are busy families where often both parents are engaged in paid work or are in a single parent situation. Children are in daycare and later, involved in sport and other extra-curricular activities as well as school. The complexity of their lives makes it more difficult to find time to attend traditionally timetabled church related activities. However, modern life presents opportunities for us to connect with grandchildren and other young people in less formal ways, whether we are physically collocated or must make use of the technological communication

skills we have gained and enhanced over the last year. Ministry of presence is about role-modeling and informal and casual opportunities to share the faith in everyday interactions. To mention a recent example, the Torres Strait Islander women in Townsville are teaching their children Creole using the Creole bible.

Ministry of presence is not a new concept, but one we could do more to cultivate. When I reflect on my childhood and adolescence, there were many instances when I was informally nurtured in the Christian faith. Some of these may resonate with you and provide ideas for increasing your ministry of presence.

- From an early age I remember experiencing the importance that my mother's Bible had for her - it was by her bed - and prayer before meals was part of the routine of eating. Meal time prayers can be extended to include young children without being precious about what they might say, but using it as an opportunity for guidance. My mother also modeled care for others, such as facilitating women to learn new skills that would open further life opportunities.
- As a child, it was important for me to be part of activities, to be included. Give children and young people opportunities to participate in church related activities, even if they have never been in your congregation before, but may just be present for a baptism. Start with basic activities such as helping to hand out books or children's resources, helping to carry the donations basket or items for feeding the nutritionally vulnerable.
- Being available and willing to answer any questions and discuss faith or church related issues in a non-judgmental manner.
- Taking the time to hear children read and reading with them provides an opportunity to introduce faith related stories and encourage reading resources that contain Christian principles to apply to their lives.



Photo: Anna Earl on Unsplash

Important in the Life of a Child

- Young people who went away for school or other study were encouraged to re-engage with the faith community when they were home for Christmas or other occasions. Giving up your turn on the reading roster is one way of achieving inclusion. Be aware, look around the congregation to identify those who could be more involved. Walk beside them, encouraging and equipping. Often adults are hesitant to share roles with children or with newcomers. Perhaps it's time to reevaluate our own need to be recognised in the church through roles and rosters.

Given that life for modern families is complex and dynamic, we need to reflect on the words of the psalmist; recognize and take hold of opportunities to exercise a ministry of presence to enable growth in faith among the generations that follow us.

Robin Ray

Release to The Wild

Waiting... each with our own thoughts.
In Departures... waiting to board
but she's already far away
Teenage dreams
and secret smiles
She checks her phone and sends a text
Her thoughts are not for me.
What does her future hold?
Will her path be straight?
Will her life be Spirit led?
Will she go another way?
I cannot know.

I care for her
pray for her
and I must set her free

© Susan Skowronski 2020

In October 1950, a man called Forest Witcraft wrote an article for a scouting magazine which included the now-famous quote— “a hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove... but the world may be different because I was important in the life of a boy.”

Although Forest Witcraft wasn't an important man, had no great wealth nor occupied a position of great honour or authority, he was the leader of a scout troop. In this position he saw an opportunity to mould young men, the ‘makers of history, builders of tomorrow’, with positive influences. This oft-repeated quote has since been adapted to cover all young people, not just boys, becoming *‘I was important in the life of a child’*.

Psalm 127 speaks of children being ‘a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him’. I believe this is an important fact to remember, whether the children are ours or someone else’s. In my role as a school Chaplain, I feel that positive, mature, faithful influences are vital in the lives of young people. In a time where any kind of faith or belief is often maligned or ignored, to speak of and live a life enriched by the Christian faith is a privilege. I am daily reminded that I should never underestimate our sphere of influence and never reduce it to mere words. Just by being with young people, being that listening, non-judgemental, ear, paying attention to what the young person is talking about, or just sharing that space in silence, speaks



volumes to these soon-to-be adults. I firmly believe that what we invest today will reap rewards for our society tomorrow and that to show compassion and kindness, to invest time in young people, to show love in an often-harsh world, will open young people to new possibilities.

And why do I think that? Because I saw it exemplified by Jesus himself, who took time to be with the marginalised, those from whom society could get nothing, those who were seen as less than useful. Jesus drew alongside and showed them a new way, The Way. He showed up and sat down, he spent the time listening to and being with those society thought irrelevant. His love of children and their child-like view on life is central to the life Jesus calls us to live and reminds us that we have a lot to learn from young people. But this is no easy or 'soft' option on our (or even Jesus') part - I can imagine that those who Jesus spent time with were not always grateful!

Young people often feel ignored, marginalised and disregarded. I saw an example of this recently when I was out to lunch with a friend. A family came and sat at a table near us and Mum and Dad got their phones out. The children sat and talked to each other but the parents were so engrossed in their phones they hadn't got a clue what the children were talking to each other about. I felt sad as the parents were missing out on the lives of their children and it's a time they will never get back – never.

We Christian disciples have an opportunity to show the young people of today just how valued they are, just as Jesus did. I love my job. I can share the love of God through my daily contact with 750 young people. I spend a lot of time planning Chapel services and some lessons, I talk to children in the playgrounds, I sit with them at lunch time and teachers often send pupils to me for some 'one to one' time. This year I plan to start a Grandparents Club at school; a place where grandparents can come and have coffee, chat to each other and then visit students in the classroom, chatting or perhaps listening to them read. I would also like grandparents to talk to classes about what life was like for them when they were young and get the students to ask them questions. We all have God-given opportunities

to show God's love to the beautiful 'heritage of the Lord', wherever we are, whoever we are. In a society of busy and overworked parents, we can show love to children and their parents by



asking God for the occasions to be the ear and heart of love that families need and to encourage the young people in their walk in life.

Kim Thomas

— Recipe — **FAMILY FAVOURITES**

Recipes and fond memories from our Executive members

JAM DROPS

From Denise Lay

"Mum's mother was a cook in her younger days in a guest house in Halls Gap, Victoria, and taught her daughters to be good cooks. Mum did the same with me, so I was very fortunate to be allowed to help at a young age. The best part was sometimes being allowed to lick the beaters.

This is one of my favourite recipes because I was always allowed to make the hole in the middle with my thumb. Every time I make these easy biscuits it reminds me of those special times of my childhood in the kitchen with Mum."

INGREDIENTS:

2 cups self-raising flour
2 eggs
¾ cup sugar
125 grams butter
Raspberry jam

METHOD:

- Beat butter and sugar to a cream.
Add eggs gradually; beat well, then add sifted flour and mix well.
- Roll mixture into balls and press a hole in centre.
- Put jam in the hole.
- Bake for 15 minutes in moderate oven. (180°)

Little StArs Shine in Inverell

What's your favourite memory as a small child? What games did you love to play? Did you have a 'go to' toy? If you were a fly on the wall at Little StArs Playgroup on Tuesday mornings, you'd see the children all have their favourite places. Often, it's the wooden train set. Lately, they've been serving themselves and anyone else they can see with a 'tup-a-tea' from the home corner and that usually comes with a slice of (plastic) pizza. The sand pit is fun. The bikes are busy. The cars are driven all sorts of exciting places. Painting is becoming popular. As for story time... I've heard Mums, who are already rushing around clearing the decks, being urged on by children, to "hurry and pack up Mum. There's a story coming"! They LOVE story time.

Our playgroup at St A's Inverell is an outreach to our community. Mums and their 0–5-year-olds gather each week to meet new friends, socialise and share their ups and downs. It takes lots of effort and energy. It's also lots of fun. We all look forward to it.

But why? Why put our energy into this particular activity? Our church's mission statement is "Growing in Christ ...". In order to grow in Christ, people need first to know Him. A valuable way of getting to know Him is through getting to know His people. As Christians share Christ through their life, service and conversation, He becomes known. As part of our St Augustine's outreach, Little StArs playgroup is a place we share time and life together. Children play. Adults talk. Life experience and conversations are shared. As Christian people who love Jesus, He is part of what and who we share.

MU plays an important part in this ministry. We have two "Little StArs Grandmas" who are MU members and reliably turn up each week. They are integral to what we do. When we first came back together after Covid lockdown, they were deemed "high risk" as older members of the community, so stayed home. We missed them. Each week someone would ask, "When are our Grandmas coming back?" There was great rejoicing when they finally did return. Their role?



Photo: Used by permission

Be Grandmas – sit and chat to Mums, help pull apart pieces of Duplo, do up a painting apron, be present. Their conversations are positive and kind. Other MU members support in their own time by doing mending and sewing jobs as the needs arise. They and the wider church family also uphold us in prayer.

Children are, indeed, a heritage from the Lord. And they're not just the future of the church. They ARE the church. They, along with their families, are loved by the Lord Jesus and so we love and welcome them too. From playgroup friendships, invitations to other Gospel outreach activities are extended. Our prayer is that they too will come to know and respond to Jesus through faith in Him.

My role at Inverell Anglican is Pastoral Worker for women and children. As well as Playgroup, I coordinate and teach Sunday School and Youth Group, run an annual outreach Kid's Club, lead a women's Bible study, pastorally visit and care for members of our church family. I value each of these ministries as they all have Jesus at the centre. On the weary days, I look to Jesus.



When disappointed, I turn to the promises in his Word. When excited at growing connections I praise him. At all times, I pray that his name will be honoured and glorified in all we do.

Tineke Dekkers



Embrace the Gift

Genesis 22:18

“...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

Our theme reminds me of my love for family history and learning about my forebears through the generations and how they influenced my life, including my Christian journey.

Even the first book of the Bible can be aligned to genealogy. Genesis records the descendants of Adam and Eve through the male lineal descent to Abraham. One of the ways God can bless us is by the giving of children, who can also come into our lives by adoption or even through fostering. Each child who comes into our life is a gift.

While not blessed with my own children, from a personal perspective when I read our theme Psalm 127: 3 “*Children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb a reward*” it made me think of my own birth and the struggle to come into this world.

Growing up, I was referred to as a miracle baby, and people spoke of how brave my Mother was, spending multiple days in labour. My Father had been told to expect the worst—that both his wife and baby may not survive the complications. Even the Hospital Matron, would, for many years, cup her hands around my face and say, “We worked so very hard to save you both”. My parents were unable to have other children, and often my Father told me, “You were God’s gift.”

As any parent, grandparent, guardian or carer knows, the process of raising a child is rich with emotions, uncertainties, joys, and sorrows. Sometimes children do wrong, they can make wrong decisions, or say bad things. Even as adults we can and also do wrong things, but God is our loving Father, full of compassion and forgiveness. The Bible is full of wisdom for parents, offering insight and understanding, when it comes to unconditional love. Even as we get older, we have



Photo: Rene Bernal on Unsplash

those days when a little reassurance that you’re helping direct a child, or anyone, down the right path is needed.

When Mary Sumner founded the Mothers’ Union it was to provide a forum in which to unite mothers of all classes in the aim of bringing up children in the Christian faith. Baptism and parental example were its two basic principles. At first a local organisation, it grew steadily into an international movement, encouraging the ideal of a Christian home.

All children deserve to be reared in a loving way, with respect and dignity. They deserve to grow up in a healthy, happy and safe environment, to enable them to have a future of hope and prosperity.

Part of our role and responsibility as Mothers Union members is to especially embrace, encourage and nurture young families who come into our church and community.

Denise Lay

More Than “How was your day?”

How do we connect with the children in our lives when starting a conversation can sometimes be easier said than done? Many questions that adults ask children can easily be shut down with a simple “yes” or “no” answer. Perhaps the questions below will help get a conversation going with grandchildren, neighbours or kids at church.

Pre-School

- What makes you happy?
- What makes you laugh?
- What is your favourite food?
- If you could be an animal for one day, what animal would you be?
- What is your favourite thing to do?
- Who is your best friend?
- What are you really good at?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Which story that grandma or grandpa tells is your favourite?
- What is your favourite Bible story? What do you like about it?

Lower Primary

- If you had one superpower, what would it be?
- If your pets and/or stuffed animals could talk, what would they say?
- If you had a genie that could grant 3 wishes, what would you wish for?
- What would you do if you swapped roles with Mum or Dad?
- If you wrote a book, what would it be about? Who would the characters be?
- What did you do to help someone else today?
- What are some of your favourite things that God created in nature?
- How did you see someone showing kindness to another person today?
- What do you like best about your brother or sister?
- Who is your favourite Bible character?

Upper Primary

- Would you rather travel back in time or travel into the future?
- If you could meet anyone from history, who would that be?
- If you grew up to be famous, what would you like to be famous for?
- If you had to go live on a space station for a month, what three things would you take with you?
- What is the funniest joke you’ve ever heard?
- Is there anything you really want to talk about that we haven’t discussed?

- How do you know when God is near? When do you feel His presence the most?
- When do you feel most proud of who you are?
- If you could invent something, what would it be? What would your invention do?
- If you had a thousand dollars to help someone, what would you do?

High School

- If you joined the circus, what act would you be?
- What is your dream holiday?
- If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?
- If you were a photographer for a day, who or what would your subject be?
- What is your favourite family tradition?
- If you had to live in another country for a year, which country would it be and why?
- If you could have lunch with anyone – living or deceased – who would it be and why?
- If you were Prime Minister, what would you do first?
- What is the most important thing you’ve learned from the Bible?
- If you could ask God one question right now, what would it be?

Carol Cuppy

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Photo: Ekaterina Shakarova on Unsplash

What happens to the funds raised for Northern Outreach?

Listen in while Viv Feltham, Diocesan President, North Queensland, and the Rev. Kate Beer Ministry Development Officer, Diocese of The Northern territory, tell of the work for women and families that has been achieved through the grants AMUA has provided on your behalf.

Kate writes about the Aboriginal church leaders' project in the **Northern Territory...**

"Most of our expectations and plans for 2020 had to be redirected because of the emergence of the COVID-19 virus. One of those affected was the professional supervision for remote Aboriginal church leaders, for which AMUA had generously given a grant.

The declaration of bio-security zones to limit travel into the remote regions and changes to the travel permit system which permits non-Aboriginal people to travel onto Aboriginal lands made rolling out this initiative very challenging! However, the Bishop continues to be very supportive, and the workers are keen, so we continued to pray and were rewarded by a successful beginning, although it was not the grand 'conference-style' launch we hoped for! Instead, we started in a small way with a trip to support the ordained Aboriginal women who lead the churches on Groote Eylandt.

The idea of pastoral supervision for ministers follows the model of clinical practitioners in fields like counselling, psychology and psychiatry. It is not intended as line management but is, rather, aimed at supporting and encouraging those in the helping professions to reflect on their ministry and the impact it is having and to find support for the challenges of ministry. But, as you can imagine, the likelihood of a

remote Aboriginal minister finding an affordable, appropriate supervisor in their community is close to zero! So, the Diocese developed a contextualised model to trial, which enables group or individual supervision in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way, called "The Territory Yarning Map".

Following their first session, the Aboriginal church leaders were very positive about their experience with the Yarning Map. One commented: "I'm really happy you came today – this picture (Yarning Map) made my mind spread wide little bit. It's OK for them [whitefellas] to do it their way, but we need to do this in a way that is clear to us. This [the Yarning Map] is really clear to me. I know this is just a picture story, but it is real in my life."

So, while regular travel to these communities is not as easy as it used to be, and we are all needing to take additional precautions, the project has now been able to restart. It is hoped that more visits to other church leaders will be possible in coming months.



Viv Feltham



Colleen, Millie and Kate with Yarning Map

Many thanks again to MU members for generously supporting the ministry in our Diocese – particularly the expensive and time-demanding ministry to church leaders and Christian women who live in geographically remote communities. Your prayers and your partnership mean a great deal to us here in the NT!"



Gayangwa and Kate with Yarning Map

From North Queensland, Viv describes AMUA support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait ministry training, workshops and travel.

"Because of the COVID 19 virus, the trip to the Torres Strait for training in 2020 was unable to go ahead. However, when travel is permitted by the authorities, we are preparing a longer stay and more workshops for 2021 and some of the Northern Outreach grant money has been reserved for this work. Planning is underway for our Regional Vice President for the Torres Strait and a team to make overnight stays on each of the Islands which have AMUA branches to encourage members and hold workshops and training.

Our Vice President for the Torres Strait, who lives on Moa Island, has made a visit to Murray Island and Thursday Island with further visits to Bamaga and Thursday Island planned. Since most of our Executive meetings were by teleconference and Zoom, we only

needed to purchase one airfare for Kathleen to come from Moa Island to Townsville. (Such a trip costs at least \$900.00). We are planning to encourage more participation at an Executive level for members from the Torres Strait, which will require future funding for travel and accommodation.

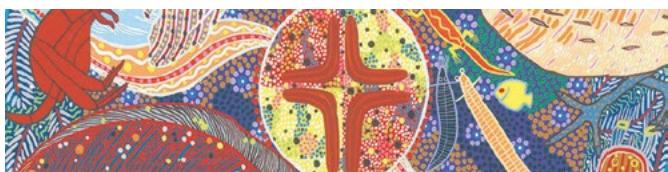
We have had no contact with parishes on Cape York, but since the appointment of a Ministry Development Officer, who is an AMUA member, we hope to visit the communities to encourage them to re-form branches.

In Townsville, ten Creole Bibles were purchased and distributed to the Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Centre for Women, so that they could teach their children Creole through reading the Bible to them.

Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns aims to support the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through study programs leading to nationally accredited Certificates in Theology and Ministry, Suicide Prevention, Social and Emotional Wellbeing, Addictions Management and Community Development. Once again, part of the AMUA Northern Outreach grant has been used to purchase books for the graduating students to further assist them in their ministry.

Many thanks from NQ."

www.wontulp.qld.edu.au



Robin Ray

Coordinator, Overseas
and Northern Outreach

Tell me a story...

Children have always loved being told a story. Sitting on Mum's lap, or tucked up in bed with Dad (or perhaps a precious grandparent), alongside they feel safe, comfortable and ready to be transported somewhere else – perhaps into another child's life to share their fun or their dilemmas, or into the lives of other people in other worlds, be those factual, fictional or fantastical.

Alongside the child there is a trusted person to share the excitement and, if needed, to explain what might be confusing, or to allay fears and anxieties if things get scary. There's someone to take responsibility for guiding the child and their reactions.



In today's digital world, individual story telling is still greatly to be encouraged, and has much to offer children for many reasons¹, choice of story, connection and comfort being amongst them.

What's changed is the multitude of "storytellers": everyone from movie and TV program makers, to game developers and advertising agencies, has a story they want to tell children. What's also changed is the motivation of the "storytellers": rarely are the "stories" designed solely to bring the child delight and to enhance their lives. All too often, the motive in keeping the child's

attention is to sell them something. All too frequently, the "story" told to children is not one that is truthful about the world in which they live and where they should hope to find enjoyment, happiness and fulfillment.

What's most concerning is the lack of connection between media "storyteller" and child viewer, and the accompanying lack of responsibility for the child's reaction to the "story". While there is a plethora of government and industry regulations and codes established "to protect children from harm" in this media environment, they mostly fail to be evidence-based, to be truly on the side of the child, and so offer little support to busy parents in making age-appropriate media choices for their children.²

The Australian Council on Children and the Media³ has for many years been advocating **for** Australian children to have access to quality age-appropriate media stories, and **against** them being exploited by content or marketing pressures. As media platforms multiply and marketing increases, ACCM's **voice** for children's rights as media consumers and its child-development-based movie and **app review services** are increasingly needed but harder to sustain.



So next time you need to choose movies or apps for children in your life, access our website. Spread the word: use us, or you may lose us!

Barbara Biggins

1. Gurdon, Meghan Cox (2019) *The Enchanted hour: the miraculous power of reading aloud in the age of distraction*. UK, Piatkus
2. <https://childrenandmedia.org.au/taking-action/current-campaigns/changing-australias-classification-system>
3. <https://childrenandmedia.org.au/>



Read Me a Story... Please

Reading stories aloud is something that most parents do when they have small children. Many may not be able to expound the research showing the positive effects of reading aloud to children or even what the children are learning, but they know that it is important. However, although 83% of 6 – 17 year olds say that being read to is something they liked or loved, research has found that just 17% of parents of children aged 9-11 read to them.

Children who have been read to are more likely to experience success in learning to read and in continuing to develop good reading skills because *listening* to stories helps to develop comprehension, vocabulary and listening skills. When the story is discussed during the reading process comprehension is improved. When new vocabulary is introduced through hearing it in the context of a story, children are more likely to understand and use it. ‘Book language’ is usually more sophisticated than the spoken language that children are likely to hear. When an adult reads to a child he or she is exposed to this sophisticated book language, making them more likely to use it themselves when they are speaking or writing. Adults can also be great models for correct pronunciation. Children can sometimes decode a word, but because they have not heard it spoken, they struggle to pronounce it correctly. In addition, the adult is modelling fluent reading, so the child hears pausing, voice changes and expression in a natural situation, making them more likely to be able to read with appropriate expression themselves.

One of the reasons that I love to hear about adults reading aloud to children is that it introduces them to books, authors, genres and texts that they may not choose for themselves. There are lots of great books available that children may not pick up by themselves but which contain fantastic stories. By reading aloud to children we can introduce a huge variety to them. This is particularly important for any child who is struggling to read. Struggling



Photo: Used by permission

readers will avoid reading altogether, or will choose books they know they can read. The vocabulary and description will be limited and story lines will be thin and uncomplicated. These limited texts are great to help them with decoding and the development of other reading skills, but not great at developing word knowledge, understanding complicated sentence structure or becoming involved in the story.

Over time a struggling reader is just not exposed to the same language, vocabulary and content as his more able friends. This has huge implications as children move to higher levels at school and are expected to be able to draw on previous experiences when writing or discussing literature. These experiences can be provided by an adult who continues to read to a child. All readers, but especially struggling readers, learn to love stories by hearing stories read to them. The strugglers can catch the joy of a story without the frustration of decoding.

A big bonus of reading aloud to children is exposing them to new genres of writing. Children often stick with the familiar and easy or comfortable. Recently I have been reading condensed versions of some classic books to a

variety of children. As we have read through these versions of books such as 'Alice in Wonderland', 'The Wizard of Oz.', 'Tom Sawyer', 'Black Beauty' and 'Treasure Island', many of the children have become interested, excited and have wanted to read the complete story or know if the author wrote other books. They look forward to hearing the next story and we choose what that will be together. Children have been excited to discover 'Anne of Green Gables' or 'Little Women' in the school library. One student bought me a copy of a book we had read when she found it at a second-hand book sale, saying, "You need the whole story!" These children have been exposed to books they would not otherwise have chosen. They have heard language that may not be found in more contemporary books and discovered that there are lots more books to choose from than the limited choice they have had so far. They have discovered adventure, history, vocabulary and life-styles that were unknown before. A bonus for me as a parent has been exposure to books my child has chosen for themselves, although I have often read ahead to satisfy myself that the story was suitable for my child.

Jim Trelease, who wrote the "Read Aloud Handbook"¹ says, 'Parents can and should be reading 7th grade books to 5th grade kids.' This is an important concept to remember so that we continue to read to the children in our lives. Remember you have the ability to get them excited about story lines, help them appreciate

complicated plots and best of all you will be developing fantastic memories of shared times in adventures roaming far and wide.

So why does reading aloud stop?

Kaye Healy



¹. 8th Edition published by Penguin Putnam, 2009

A Helping Hand, a Smiling Face

We only need to look around us to see the struggle many young parents and families are facing. The increased divorce rate, broken families, depression, loneliness, addiction...the list goes on. But as Christians we know the importance of the gospel in reaching young parents and families in all these situations. We know that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the only true hope and answer to the brokenness of this world. We need to support young families by sharing the gospel with them so that when parenting is hard they have the good news of Jesus to fall back on. But how can older Christian women do this for the next generation today? As a young mother of four children aged eight and under, knowing that I have the forgiveness of Jesus when dealing with cranky pre-teens, testing four-year-olds and newborns that think they don't need sleep is the most encouraging thing I can have as a parent.

Paul in his New Testament letters frequently calls on the older women of the church to train and equip younger women and to encourage them to love their husbands and children (Titus 2). As Christian women we are called to be good witnesses to the next generation for Christ. Even Timothy himself was introduced to the gospel by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). The Bible is full of examples about how as Christians we are to be a witness to the world, but how do we do this in practical terms?

One example occurred in a church we previously attended, when a group of ladies had a vision to get a playgroup up and running in order to



connect with the community. This group of ladies came to the church every week, made coffee and served morning tea for all the playgroup mums who attended. Through this ministry these ladies demonstrated the church's love and care for the twenty-ish non-Christian families that came each week. These mums, often with multiple children to care for, looked forward to Mondays so they could get a hot coffee and some adult conversation and their kids entertained for a few hours —and hopefully worn out enough to have a sleep!

Our current church has the blessing of having many families attending. We are a loud bunch with lots of energy each Sunday morning. We have also been blessed to have older church members who help by doing the cleaning after church, so those who need to go home with kids, can. A few of the older ladies take turns to hold our youngest (currently 6 months) so that I can teach Sunday School each week. For many parents, simply getting a welcoming smile, an encouragement that their children are appreciated (despite their tantrum during the third song) and a good cup of coffee at the end of the service, means more than anything else we can offer. We constantly thank God for these amazing church members who love our kids and have a desire to have more young children and families in church because they know that many need to hear the good news of Jesus and to feel that community support in a young mining town. Bringing young children to church is hard work, but if the family is loved and supported by the congregation they will keep coming and feel part of the church family.

My husband and I have the immense privilege of serving in ministry. Often, we have spoken to older women who are at a stage in their lives where their health is failing and physically they are unable to do things they previously could. Our encouragement to these people is that, no matter their age and health, they are able to pray and we know that God is able to answer our prayers in ways we could never imagine. As BCA field staff we have the privilege each month of having people praying for us all over Australia. Many of these people we do not know and will never meet till heaven, but this prayer support is a huge encouragement to us and many other ministry families serving

all over Australia. Even a simple card in the mail or a birthday card or small gift on our children's birthdays has been a comforting reminder that we are part of a wider body of Christ and a physical demonstration of that to our children.

Amanda Kyngdon

— Recipe — FAMILY FAVOURITES

Recipes and fond memories from our Executive members

GRANDMA'S APPLE CAKE

From Lyn Middleton

"This recipe is not uncommon but my memories of my grandmother making it are so special. They lived on a farm surrounded by forested hills in the middle of the Otway Ranges in Southern Victoria.



First, to make the cake we children were sent out to the orchard surrounding the farmhouse to pick up all the fallen apples. Then we had to help peel them and identify any with codling moth larvae. Of course, we didn't want to touch the wriggly things so Grandma dealt with what we considered too yucky to touch.

The apple pieces were stewed on the wood stove...no electricity or gas on the farm.

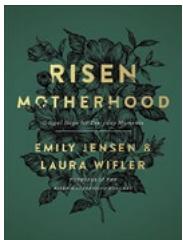
The recipe I am sure was different every time depending on what was available but we think it went something like this:"

- Take at least **2 cups of stewed apples** (or lots more to make it deliciously moist) and while hot add **a cup of sugar**.
- Cool, then beat in a **gorgeous farm egg** and **2 cups of flour** (if using plain flour add baking powder) with any spices at hand... usually cinnamon, cloves etc. Add **1 to 2 cups mixed dried fruit**.
- Cook in a lamington tin using a moderate oven. Be careful not to put too much fuel in the firebox.
- Eat when hot or cold and if you must it can be iced.



From My Bookshelf

Catherine Hearne, from Armidale, shares her thoughts on two books she has enjoyed recently.



Risen Motherhood. Gospel Hope for Everyday Moments by Emily Jensen and Laura Wifler, published by Harvest House, 2019

I first picked this book up in order to see if it would be a good gift for my daughter and daughter in law who are both new mums (it would!) Although aimed at mums with young children, it is also a very useful book for everyone. What I found most useful was the model that the authors used for bringing the gospel of Jesus into play in all aspects of our life.

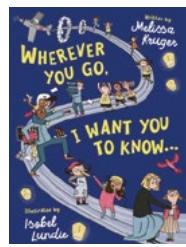
The authors take aspects of parenting and run them through 'gospel eyes' to see how the risen Jesus makes a difference. As a Christian, I want to do what God desires. But how do I work that out? How do I live the gospel in all aspects of my life?

For each aspect of motherhood the authors address, they ask

1. What does the current culture say about this?
2. What did this look like in the garden of Eden? What was God's perfect plan?
3. What happened at the Fall? How does sin impact this situation? (So helpful as we can see why we struggle with so many aspects of our lives.)
4. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus impact this particular issue?
5. How will this look in the new creation? What do we have to look forward to?

Each chapter is concluded by helping us apply those answers to our everyday situations.

I really enjoyed reading this beautifully presented book and highly recommend it for all mums of young children and for a much wider audience as well.

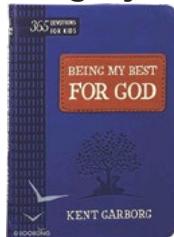


Wherever You Go, I Want You to Know by Melissa Kruger and Isobel Lundie (published by The Good Book Company Ltd)

This world tells our children they can be anything, do anything. But as Christians, what is it that we want most for the little ones in our lives? This book beautifully points to our desire for our loved ones to know and love Jesus above all things. It is written in a poetic style with hints of Dr Seuss, beautifully illustrated and has a clear message - the most important thing is Jesus! I have bought copies for my grandchildren, God-children and new bubs at church. I hope it becomes a favourite to be read aloud in all their households. Publishers recommend suitable from age 3, but I would be reading it from birth! Such a lovely book with such an important message.

Looking for something to encourage children to engage with the Bible? Here are some suggestions.

Being My Best for God - 365 devotions for kids"



by Kent Garborg (Published by Broadstreet)

"This book helps calm me and to understand God's word and it's good for devotions every day of the year." Joshua, aged 9

The Garden, the Curtain and the Cross. The True Story of Why Jesus Died and Rose Again (Tales That Tell The Truth Series) by Carl Laferton and Catalina Echeverri (Published by The Good Book Company)



This book tells the Easter story by means of a Bible overview, taking readers on a journey from the Garden of Eden to God's perfect new creation. As well as the book itself, several other resources are available, including a colouring book and 15-door calendar and devotions for the two weeks before Easter.

"Not a Bible as such, but brings the message of the gospel together with gorgeous illustrations and explanations for kids aged 3-6." Cindy (Mum)



PODCAST

By Kids for Kids Bible Stories podcast. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/by-kids-for-kids-bible-stories/id1232505895>

"Our boys really love that kids are telling them the Bible. They often wonder why more of their friends aren't Christians, so to listen to other kids reading them the Bible is particularly awesome." Fiona Preston, Bendigo

What is a Grandmother?

A poignant description of grandmothers from a 9-year old.



"A grandmother is a lady who has no children of her own. She likes other people's little girls and boys. A grandfather is a man grandmother."

Grandmothers don't have to do anything except be there. They're old, so they don't have to play hard or run. It is enough if they take us to the shops where the pretend horse is and have lots of coins ready. Or if they take us for walks, they should slow down past things like pretty leaves or caterpillars. They should never say 'hurry up'.

Usually grandmothers are fat, but not too fat to tie your shoes. They wear glasses and funny underwear. They can take their teeth out and gums off. Grandmothers don't have to be smart, only answer questions like 'Why isn't God married?' And 'How come dogs chase cats?' They don't talk baby-talk like visitors do, because it is hard to understand. When they read to us they don't skip words, or mind if it is the same story over and over again.

Everyone should try to have a grandmother, especially if you don't have television, because they are the only grownups who have time".

Author unknown



Rain Dog

— a purpose-written story

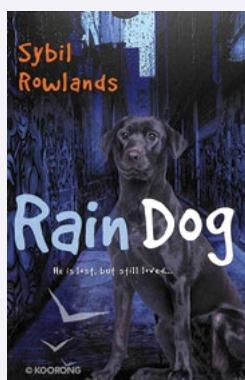
Muriel van Twest

In the very early 1990s, the church I was attending was having financial troubles. Having a story published and making money to help the church would be easy, or so I naively thought. A romance or thriller was not my choice; it had to be a story for children. Eventually the story of *Rain Dog* emerged.

I chose to write about a dog that was timid and the story evolved from there. The timidity of the dog may be a reflection of timid folk who can be strong when necessary. I had also read newspaper articles about dogs that had run away in storms, so knew it was the right idea.

From the 1990s homelessness has concerned me, so having a homeless man as a central character was important to me. I formed all the characters from newspaper articles, people I have known and my own imagination. The main characters in *Rain Dog* reflect my own up-bringing when elders were addressed and treated with respect. I do not consider myself to be a natural author and like to say that the story wrote itself with the Lord's leading and guidance.

I sent the *Rain Dog* manuscript to various publishers but with no success. In March 2017, when on a flight back from Brisbane after a short holiday, I was reading a magazine I had with me. An advertisement from a self-publisher caught my attention, giving me the strong conviction that I should choose them to publish my story. My husband and I discussed finances and I went ahead with self-publishing *Rain Dog*.



Children are a blessing and a heritage from the Lord. Childhood experiences result in how, as adults, they will treat others around them. This not only benefits them, but society too. I believe that *Rain Dog* will be a story read and loved by others and will influence many children, making them a true heritage from the Lord.

Nurturing Children Through Mothers Union

In the Diocese of Brisbane...

NORTH PINE

North Pine AMUA works with children and parents in the community with the help of the Children and Youth Coordinator in our parish. Members help coordinate breakfasts at school and meals for families in crisis. Although COVID 19 has affected the way we do things, two members of North Pine volunteer at our Mainly Music group, joining the singing and activities and providing morning tea for the children and their parents.

We have an active cradle roll and at baptisms, parents are given a gift of a knitted teddy and a beautiful card prepared by two of our members- Joan and her daughter, Margaret. Joan, currently our oldest member, keeps up the supply of lovely knitted teddies and Margaret makes the beautiful cards. Other groups within the Parish often supply additional gifts.

Joan Bird, President North Pine



Joan Stephenson with two of her teddies



STAFFORD

AMUA Stafford Branch has been involved with the Baptism and Cradle Roll ministry since the 1960s. Little ones receive hand knitted teddies and a book of prayers for their parents to read with them. Our Rector presents an AMUA Baptism folder to all, and older children and confirmation candidates receive a suitable book and gift. Just before the anniversary of each child's baptism, up to the age of 4 years, a "Happy Anniversary" letter is sent to them.

Our Prayer & Spirituality Secretary, June Cavell, enjoys preparing the teddies. As she sews on

the little faces she prays that the parents and their baby will feel the love and support of the church family. Sometimes there is also that special moment a family returns to church with their children, who bring their teddies, sometimes well-worn, but much loved.

AMUA members have been involved with the "Mainly Music" team at St. Clements since its inception. A gift bag consisting of the AMUA fold-up bag, AMUA advertising literature, a handmade gift for the mother and the book "Hello God" for the baby is presented to mothers of newborns. Some members are also involved with the

"Children's nativity service" each November.



**Rose Mowat,
Stafford Branch**

*Stafford Baptism Ministry.
Judy Stacey, President, (L)
and June Cavell, Prayer &
Spirituality Secretary, who
knitted all the tiny teddies.*

ST. ANNE'S REDCLIFFE

The Anglican Parish of Redcliffe operates the St Anne's Playgroup at Scarborough, which offers a venue for the mums to gather together to socialize, communicate and learn parenting skills. The children interact with others and learn many social and cognitive skills, all while keeping fairly clean in a safe environment. After singing Grace, morning tea is enjoyed, during which a Bible story is told- a subtle introduction to our Christian beliefs. The craft table is always popular and the children love the music segment, thoroughly enjoying the music and dancing with each other and their mums.

It is a real joy to see the children's faces when they realize they can climb the ladder on the slide, scoot on the ride-on toys, glue the stars or carrots onto paper or jig to the music at music time. What a gracious reward it was when one of our mums was so impressed with our team, the fun and the respect we had for each other and our Christian

approach to playgroup, that she and her husband asked to have their children baptized!

Lee Raw



ST JOHN'S HERVEY BAY

Our journey to minister God's love starts at the Maternity Ward in our local hospital, where each week two AMUA members visit the Mums and welcome each new baby with a handmade gift. Information about baptism is given if requested and a gift left in the Special Nursery for any premmie or ill baby. AMUA members have been carrying out this ministry for the last 19 years and have visited at least 3500 mothers and babies in this time.

Parents who bring their children to be baptised are welcomed by an AMUA member with the gift of a Baptismal Bear and information about our organization. On Mothering Sunday each year parents are invited to bring the children with their bears for a "Teddy Bear Service".

Mainly Music provides a gentle way of inviting parents and grandparents to bring their little ones into our church in a loving and non-threatening way. We have 16 on team, eight of whom are AMUA members.



Baptism at
Hervey Bay



Hervey Bay Mainly Music

Messy Church has also proved to be great fun and it is encouraging to have families from Mainly Music join us once a month. After a welcome

song and bible story the children engage in messy activities such as gluing, glittering, and sometimes cooking. At the conclusion they go off to church for a children's reflection, worship and singing. Dinner is then served, and we all sit down at the tables and share the meal and fellowship. We feel that we are blessed to have been called to this ministry and wait to see if we can resume in 2021.

Helen Jarvis, President

CLEVELAND

The AMUA Branch at Cleveland supports the Baptism ministry in this large parish in a number of ways. Members take turns in attending every baptism service held in the parish (24 last year), presenting small gifts to the families and giving a short talk on Mothers Union. Several members knit teddies which are presented to babies and toddlers and we purchase small books of prayers for older children. Cards are sent on the anniversary of each child's baptism for five years. Approximately 25 cards per month are posted, with members donating stamps to assist in this ministry. This is a valuable ministry to young families and one in which all AMUA members can be involved.

Eve Knott, Co-President

ALL SAINTS CHERMSIDE

One morning a week, young children from babies to preschool age, accompanied by an adult, are welcomed to Little Saints Playgroup. Our church hall is a wonderful space for children to run around and play. With a wide range of toys, craft activities and games, the playgroup gives children a chance to play in a safe environment, while parents, grandparents and carers enjoy some adult conversation. Members of Chermside



Mothers Union branch have assisted with the running of the playgroup since its inception, and those who come have offered high praise for its outreach and the quality of the toys, the activities and the volunteers who make it possible.

Chermside Playgroup

MALENY

AMUA members in Maleny have been involved in a number of ministries to children over the years. Maleny Kids' Club and a Mothers of Pre-schoolers (MOPS) group offered opportunities for sharing in the lives of children and their families. More recently, AMUA members have been involved in the provision of activity bags for children who attend church and the teaching of Religious Instruction in the local school.

Young children can make a commitment to Jesus and fulfil their commitment for the rest of their life. When we were residing in Melbourne while my husband studied at Ridley Theological College, our 8-year.old daughter came to me and said "Mummy, I don't know if I am a real Christian or not". I explained how we become a Christian, and she said that was what she wanted, so we prayed together. Ann is now 42, still committed, and even through high school worked with the Christian group seeking to bring others to know Jesus.

Jesus said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

Judy Payne, President

BUNDABERG

One of the beautiful ministries of the Bundaberg AMUA is to present a Baptism Bear to each newly baptised child, along with a copy of St. Luke's Gospel. Gwen keeps the Cradle Roll updated and makes beautiful age-appropriate cards with a suitable message or bible verse on the insert. Each card is prayed over and posted to each child on the anniversary of their baptism until they are five years old. On the third anniversary, "Talk with God", a collection of prayers for young children, is included. To encourage parents and their children to come to worship and join in various parish activities information about Kidsplus and Kids in Church Service is mailed to the parents of children who have outgrown the roll. AMUA always provides a Confirmation cake and a gift to those confirmed in our church.

Another member, Christine, is part of the team who teach R.E. in schools. She enjoys the contact with the children and the opportunity of teaching them about a God who loves each of them and

Jesus who is their friend, and teaches them how to pray.

We also have a ministry to the children who are the victims of Domestic Violence. Each month we give two bags of new items suggested to us by EDON Place (Women's Refuge), such as shorts, shirts, undies, books, colouring in books, pencils, puzzles, cuddly toys, and a crochet rug.

Bev Perry, President. Brisbane Diocese



...and in The Murray.

Our members donate provisions for many charities and we hope that these benefit the children of families concerned. In Mount Barker the branch takes an interest in the Zonta program, 'Expect Respect', in the local schools and prays regularly for them. Although the AMUA 'Families Equip' sessions are not specifically for the children to attend, it is all about developing participants' parenting and grand parenting skills, which obviously impacts the children. AMUA members often run the crèche so that parents are free to attend and in this way we have a time of personal contact with babies and young children. Our diocese finds the Families Equip to be so fulfilling of the Mothers Union aims and objects. Our latest course of 5 weeks, when finished, will have taken over a year to complete thanks to COVID 19!!!! Just when we thought it was safe to go back, we were hit with a second wave.

Many of our members also help with breakfast clubs, school volunteering and so on, although some of these worthwhile things are not always done and organised in the name of AMUA. Whether any of these activities have bought children closer to God is not to be known by us but I feel we are caring for the little ones as expected.



Jocelyn Williamson, President



Over the Fence

Football Hooligans in the Crèche

There was neither novelty nor originality about the idea. We had decided to form a new bible study with the gripping title of "Young Mums' Bible Study Group." We approached the inclusion of the word "young" with the delicacy the subject deserved, agreeing that it was a fluid term with no fixed numeral attached. Years later, when numbers commencing with the digit "4" appeared on our birthday cards – with no actual discussion but rather unified silent consent – the word "young" disappeared quietly and without moment, along with bikinis, shoes that hurt and all hopes of representing Australia at anything.

We recognised early that without our crèche carers we were sunk. Crèche had come to have a life of its own. As mothers, we were oftentimes privy only to its bookends. We would share a farewell kiss with our toddler that had notes of Jatz and apple, along with something undefinable, then enjoy a delightful reunion involving no shoes and a turned-up trouser leg full of sand. Sometimes there was clear evidence of what had passed in that glorious hour - green playdough adhered to the hair for example, or, more alarmingly, a 4x2 LEGO brick appearing uneventfully in a nappy 24 hours later. More commonly however, the Mesolithic period of crèche was largely unknown, and the little ones closely guarded their happy secret.

One bright morning however, a piece of new evidence emerged. It was a bruise. It was enormous. It was clearly exactly seven days old. It was on the shin of one of our oldest, most beloved crèche carers, a woman whose legs had trodden through more midnight paddocks to assist a newborn calf than we had had hot dinners. Closer inspection revealed a repeated (surely not?)

hexagonal pattern and the merest suggestion of the word "FIFA." We were unanimously horrified, all secretly hoping that in the inevitable inquest to follow, that our own little Ronaldo might be found to have been enjoying flower-pressing the previous week, thus being totally disconnected from such an obvious case of football hooliganism.

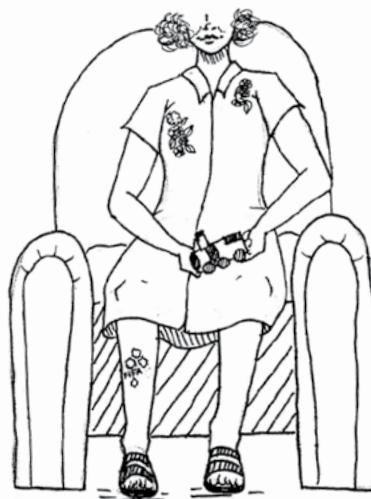


Illustration: Freya Grice

We plied our dear carer with questions of concern and enquiry. Did it hurt? Had she needed to seek medical help? Did she feel up to crèche today?

Within a very short time of looking at her happy face (and on noting the fact that she was wearing sturdier shoes than normal), it was obvious that we had completely misread the situation. The bruise was a badge of honour, and she was back for a rematch. In all likelihood, her kitchen chalkboard had been wiped clean, her usual list of upcoming birthdays erased to make way for formation diagrams and positional plays. An interesting image formed in my mind. Was I imagining it or was her blouse and cardigan sitting less freely than normal? Could I perceive another hidden layer, red in colour, with the word "Beckham" just detectable on the reverse?

Our children, well-acquainted with their own bruises, inspected the injured lower limb and showed their respect by way of silent admiration. Then, without a backward glance, they took their beloved crèche carer by the hand and led her outside to the waiting sunshine.

Crèche 1: Mothers 0.

"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it." 1 Corinthians 12:27

Virginia Grice

Around the Dioceses

BUNBURY

There was much excitement as 71 members from across the diocese gathered in Mandurah for the Country Rally on 27th October. In addition to the time of worship and fellowship over a meal, this saw the launch of a "Christmas Recipe Book", featuring favourite recipes from members of Mandurah branch.

Members of AMUA continue to donate cash and goodies to the seafarers' appeal. All goods are assembled by workers at the Seafarers Centre into "Comfort Boxes", which are then taken to a distribution point to be checked before being taken on board the ships. On average, one ship enters Bunbury port each day so this outreach is an ongoing process.



Publication Manager Sylvia Spicer doing a brisk trade at the Bunbury Country Rally.



Christmas Recipe Books selling like hot cakes.

GRAFTON

The year 2020 was for us like most Mothers Union groups around the world – from much happening to nothing – to gradually coming out of hibernation and tentatively finding new ways to minister and meet and stay in touch.

Here in Grafton Diocese our executive has gone from meeting face to face to taking on Zoom

meetings which I don't think any had thought they'd be doing in their lifetimes as they love to meet for fellowship and ministry. There is much to be thankful for in this modern age if these different forms of communication are used correctly. Some of our parish MU groups have once again started to meet in member's homes, a favourite coffee shop or a park.

Recently I attended a wonderful day of celebration at Alstonville. During the Eucharist I had the pleasure of presenting Elaine Pring and Isobel Farlow with their 60-year membership badges. Both ladies have faithfully continued to spread God's love wherever He has called them to. The day included the cutting of a celebration cake during morning tea followed by a luncheon for 30 guests at the House With No Steps. Everyone enjoyed the day immensely, with MU friends having travelled from Ballina, Goolmangar, Kempsey, Coffs Harbour and Grafton.

Gae Shorten, Diocesan Leader



Isobel Farlow and Gae Shorten



Margaret Hardwicke, Gae Shorten and Elaine Pring

MELBOURNE

Corio M.U. members are still talking about and re-reading items from their Goody Bags; some have shared them with family and friends.

The contributions to AMUA Funds amounted to over \$850 from 10 members, more than our usual fundraiser events raise each year, greatly exceeding expectations.

Sandra Trewartha

NEWCASTLE

Across the Diocese members have been meeting when possible and keeping in touch by phone, email and letter-box drops when in lock-down. Members of several branches observed the Wave of Prayer in their homes, and support for local projects continued throughout 2020: This

included items for baby bundles and knitting for the Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit at the John Hunter Hospital, baby bootees for the Birthing Unit and toiletry kits to be used in the Emergency Department at Belmont Hospital. Members also continued to knit squares to make rugs for Jenny's Place Women's Refuge.

Denise Callaway, Wyong Mothers Union President, presented Wyong High School Chaplain, Jackie McGregor, with French knitting kits to be used in the "Shine" program, which encourages self-esteem in girls. Gifts of toiletries, candles and pens were also presented. These are included in positive mental health packs for students.



In Boolaroo members made up some emergency packs for those living out of their cars, or are in dire situations. In all, five men's, five ladies' and four family packs were delivered to Samaritans Relief Centres.



Kath Harris and Nancy Andrews packing Emergency Care packages

PERTH

Groups have been able to meet with few restrictions during the latter half of 2020, for which we thank God. Our first, and last, Diocesan gathering for the year was held on 28th October when over 60 members met at St. Matthew's Guildford for the Annual General and Council meetings. The day began with a Thanksgiving service, at the conclusion of which new member Rona Soro was admitted to AMUA. It was a joy to see so many of her friends in their colourful uniforms there to encourage her.



The Rev'd Frida Lemi,(L) and Kaye Healy (R) welcome Rona (in yellow)

WANGARATTA

The sounds of traditional Christmas Carols and Bible Lessons fill the air during Advent across the world, spreading the message of good will and the spirit and meaning of Christmas. On Thursday, 16 December a small band of members of the Anglican Parish of Central Goulburn Mother's Union gathered together for their annual Seven Lessons and Carols service at St Paul's Anglican Church in Avenel. This service gives the members some peace and preparation before the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem and was led by our parish priest Rev. Richard Pennington.

Diane Grant



MU celebrates Advent at St Paul's Anglican Church in Avenel. L to R: Di Grant, Jenny Moran, Gladys Burgoyne, Rev. Richard Pennington, Marlene Brew, Mary Greenshields, Dawn Leece and Dawn Elliott.

Jesus said,

*“Do not be afraid.
I am the first and the last.
I am the living One;
I was dead, and behold I am
alive for ever and ever!
And I hold the keys of
death and Hades”.*

REVELATION 1:17-18

