

SUMMER 2021

*O come let us
adore Him*





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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.

MIAmia

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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:
Lord, transform me

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Meet Our Contributors



The Rev'd. Dr Ann Solari is a deacon at St John's Cathedral, a GP working with people in the homeless sector in Brisbane, a mother, grandmother, gardener, rambler and owner of 14 chickens. At the Cathedral she coordinates children's ministry, the

Baptism program and the ministry with rough sleepers. She is passionate about social justice and helping everyone and everything in this world to flourish. She is eagerly waiting for international borders to safely open so that she can return to Tuscany and walk from Bologna to Rome via Assisi!



Rev'd Janis Donohoo is 'a baby boomer', who is still in part-time work as an Anglican Deaconess Ministries chaplain and from 2004 to 2009, and from 2014 to the present, the honorary chaplain to Mothers Union, Sydney. As a deacon Jan has worked

in parish and hospital chaplaincy, including 17 years at Children's Hospital, Westmead. Of MU Jan says, 'Before I joined, I knew little of MU. However, I have learned so much from the women and men who serve the Lord through MU. It is very impressive Christian service.'

Jan and her husband Mark have one daughter whom they are very keen to visit as soon as the NSW lockdown ends. Jan describes herself as having 'eclectic tastes – Fleming Rutlege and James Packer; Maria Callas, Paul Kelly and Vika and Linda; Helen Garner, Tim Winton and the Parramatta Eels.'



Rosemary Snibson was born in Sydney, but spent her first 9 years in Mendi, Papua New Guinea, where her parents were pioneer missionaries. The family returned to Australia in 1960 and Rosemary completed her schooling in Orange (NSW) and at

the University of WA. After completing her degree, she returned to Papua New Guinea to work at Dauli Teachers College with APCM for one year.

Rosemary then taught at Bridgetown Secondary School in WA, before travelling to Melbourne to study at Ridley College, where she met her husband, Derek. Both felt called to work with socio-economically disadvantaged communities in the inner city and, after Derek was ordained, their work took them to St Mark's Templestowe, St Jude's Carlton church plant in the Highrise, St Luke's South Melbourne and All Saints' Clayton.

Rosemary has worked in various roles: running Sunday School, teaching ESL classes and women's activity groups, beginning a Youth Outreach Program for young people at risk, and sessional teaching at Swinburne University. At All Saints Clayton she was the Coordinator of Dixon House Neighbourhood Centre, an outreach to the community. Rosemary and Derek increasingly felt drawn to Mission amongst Indigenous people and in 2017 entered St Andrews Hall for training. For the last 3 years they have been working as CMS missionaries, in Ngukurr and, currently, in Darwin.

Contents

From the Editor's desk	
Christine Brain	4
A word from our President	
Rev'd Anne Kennedy	5
Pray without ceasing? Really?	
Christine Jensen, Vice President.....	6
From the Publication Department.....	7
'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!' – 2 Corinthians 9:15	
Denise Lay, Promotion and Development Coordinator.....	8
Moving from uncertainty to trust in God with faithful expectation	
Dr. Robin Ray, Overseas and Northern Outreach Coordinator	9
Hope for a new normal?	
Susan Skowronski, Social Issues and Action Coordinator	10
Children's ministry through YouTube	
Rev'd Dr. Ann Solari.....	11
Earthiness and holiness	
Rev'd. Dr. Lesley McLean, Prayer and Spirituality Coordinator....	12
Mothers Union Sydney moves into the online world for parenting courses	
Ann Cunningham.....	13
Practical love in the context of aging and dementia	
Rev'd Ben Boland	14
The Christmas visitor	
Rt Rev'd Dr Peter Brain	16
News from the Top End	
Rosemary Snibson	17
Advent – holding the tension	
Rev'd Janis Donohoo	18
Remember!	
John Cronshaw	19
God, with Mothers Union, does it again!	
Jocelyn Ross	20
Faithful servants remembered.....	21
Blessed and used as BCA Nomads	
Noelle Frazer	22
From my bookshelf	23
Tweens and the M movie dilemma	
Barbara Biggins	25
Over the Fence	
Virginia Grice	26
'Away from it all' holidays in Gippsland	27
Encouraging faith and hope	
Rev'd Peter Dyke	28
Around the dioceses	29



From the Editor's desk

Welcome to the Summer 2021 issue of *Mia Mia*; what a feast of reading we have to enjoy. As usual, we have thought-provoking and encouraging articles from our regular contributors and lots of news of AMUA activities around Australia. It's very clear that, even though COVID 19 has caused major disruptions to our lives, Mothers Union members have been working hard to encourage one another and to offer help and support to others. And how well have we adapted to using Zoom to meet and share! Just read about the commissioning of the new President of Bendigo if you need an example!

We also have articles from **Barbara Biggins**, Honorary CEO of the Australian Council on Children and the Media (of which AMUA is a member), who writes helpfully about how carers can assess the suitability of particular movies for the children in their care. **Rev'd Ben Boland**, aged-care chaplain and advocate, gives us some practical tips to help us minister to older people in our community, **Rev'd Peter Dyke** offers us a window into how we can understand our own feelings of things being 'not quite right' and how we can encourage others in similar situations and **Rev'd Ann Solari** shares her experience of children's ministry using Facebook and YouTube.

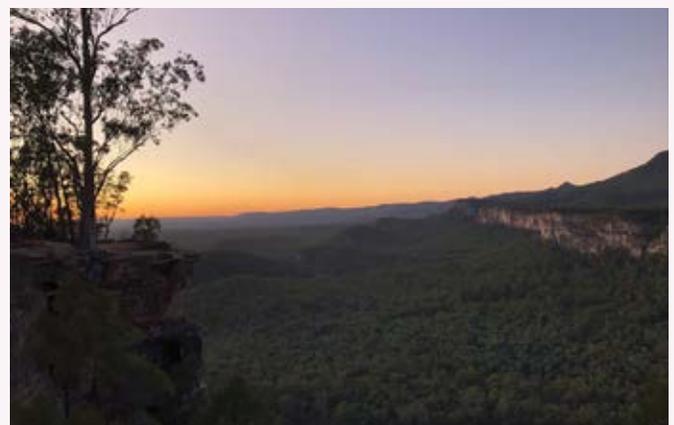
I would like to say 'thank you' to **Kate Beer** for the informative articles we have received from her over the years, keeping us informed and enthused about what God is doing in the Northern territory.



Kate, her husband Tavis, and their two children will be returning to Melbourne in 2022 to be closer to extended family. However, we're delighted to welcome **Rosemary Snibson**, who will keep us informed of happenings in the Northern Territory.

Have I whetted your appetite yet? I hope you enjoy this issue and find much to encourage your faith, inspire your service and refresh your thinking. In Luke 1:76-79, Zechariah, in praising God for the birth of his son, John, prophesied, ⁷⁶'And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before **the Lord** to prepare his ways,⁷⁷ to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,⁷⁸ of the tender mercy of our God, whereby **the sunrise** shall visit us from on high⁷⁹ to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.' As you celebrate Advent and Christmas, may you rejoice in Jesus, the Light of the world, who came to dispel the darkness of sin and sorrow and may you know His peace. (John 16:33)

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

The great sponge-cake disaster!



Gifts – we all have them, whether they are very obvious or not. Cooking is not my gift! When Mum hit the kitchen on a Saturday afternoon, my sister and I were banished to the yard to play. So, I am quite good at simple nourishing meals and creative sandwiches, but nothing ‘fancy’.

I was caring for my 8-year-old granddaughter while her Mum gave cello lessons via Zoom to students during the Covid lockdown. So, with my lack of skill in culinary arts, I was daunted when Scarlett said, ‘We are making a sponge cake!’ (I need a recipe if I’m called on to make scones...)

We gathered the ingredients, and soon we had a decent looking mix in a big bowl, and she began to gently ‘fold-in’ (as I’d heard my Mum say) the flour. All was looking good.

But somehow we both got distracted, and suddenly the bowl was up-ended, with half the mixture flowing across the floor. Scarlett was horrified, I was mortified (more about the mess we made than what had happened!).

Just then, by divine intervention I’m sure, Melissa walked in and calmly sorted us both out – she comforted Scarlett, mopped up the mess, and made a cup of tea. We laughed and reminisced about the time Melissa did the same thing making Crackle Pops when she was little. Maybe I choose bowls that are too big for little arms?

One of Melissa’s gifts is calmness and practicality. One of Scarlett’s gifts is the enthusiasm of an 8-year-old. One of my gifts is to reminisce and make people laugh. Each gift is different, and yet each was so important on that afternoon.

Our gifts may be obvious, such as musical or artistic creativity, but they may also just be part

of who we are – a calming influence, a quick wit, having a joyous laugh or a welcoming smile, for example. God gives us these gifts to bring us closer to others so that we can share God’s love with them.

As we approach Christmas and the holiday season, hopefully able to gather with friends and loved ones, let’s remember those God-given gifts we have been given to share.

Let’s also remember that God’s greatest gift to humankind, and to us as individuals, was the birth of Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world. Jesus brought us the gifts of faith, hope and love, and we pray that his message will give comfort and strength to all believers, and transformation to those who have yet to be touched by his life.

Christmas blessings!

Anne Kennedy

Oops! My mistake...

I wrote in the last *Mia Mia* that the AMUA Travelling Plaque, thanks to the generosity of Rick Howes, was to be passed on to other branches celebrating 60 years, but this wasn’t the original intention.

It’s to be passed on **to any branch**, wherever it should go, regardless of its age or locality. For example, if your branch has had it, and a member is travelling to a place where another AMUA branch is meeting, it can be taken and handed on. Or it can go to your neighbouring branch.

A small plaque is engraved, and a Branch Book is added to at each stop, describing the branch and area. A copy of this entry is to be sent back to Rick, Barbara and the Wyong AMUA Secretary (details in the book accompanying the Travelling Plaque) so that a record is kept, and an AMUA book can be created.





Pray without ceasing? Really?

I always think that, while it may have been easy for the Apostle Paul to say, 'Pray without ceasing', (1 Thess 5:17) it is impossible for me! When I become busy and have to look after others, my mind is focused on the moment, and the moment can extend to hours at a time. How can I 'pray without ceasing'?

It helps to see what else he said at the same time: 'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you' (1 Thess 5:16-18). I think he is urging us not to stop praying, rather than to fill every moment with prayer. It is God's will for me that I always rejoice, pray and give thanks.

The two encouragements, to rejoice and the give thanks are helpful as we think about how to pray constantly. You can't simply decide to rejoice or to give thanks. There must be something to rejoice in and to give thanks for. Rejoicing and thankfulness come out of experiences we have. I think that this helps us to understand prayer as well.

When our thoughts and hearts go to the Lord Jesus, we rejoice, give thanks, and pray. There is a wonderful verse in 2 Corinthians. Paul is talking about generosity and what provokes us to be generous to those in need. It is not because we are trying to impress God or to secure a place in heaven. It is because we are inspired by what God has done for us: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich' (8:9).

It's not an accident, is it, that Christmas time is filled with joy and gift-giving? Even though for most people the joy and the gifts are simply custom, they have sprung originally from the gift of the love of God, that the Lord Jesus became poor for us, by being born into this world as one of us. Without the grace of the Lord Jesus, Christmas loses its real joy. We can only rejoice, pray and give thanks when our hearts are possessed by who Jesus is and what he has done for us.



Photo credit: Sincerely Media on Unsplash

Of course, it is right to have a special time to pray each day and to have a list of people or events to pray for. But our prayers can extend beyond that as we think of what Jesus has done for us and the needs of people around us.

Here are some suggestions.

When you think of someone you know, briefly lift them to the Lord in prayer. When someone rings or gets in touch, pray for them – even if it is only someone trying to sell you something! When we see our leaders on the media, remember to pray for them. When you hear of a tragedy in the community, pray for those affected. When you see someone on the street or in the bus who seems to be lost, alone or sad, pray for them.

Such prayers do not have to be structured or lengthy. It may only be a brief word asking for God's blessing upon a person's soul and circumstances. But the Lord knows how to hear us as we care for others in such a way.

I think that the Covid drama has made us more prayerful. One of the good habits that Christians have is saying grace at meals. It is good to pause, if only for a moment, to acknowledge that our food comes from God and that we are completely dependent on him. But it is also an opportunity for the household to pray over other matters as well.

The media love to criticise our political leaders and to diminish them; as Christians our task is to pray for them (1 Timothy 2:1-4). This is by far the most effective way of contributing to the well-being of our nation.

Another noteworthy thing this Bible passage says is that we are 'to give thanks in all circumstances.' Most of us will find ourselves in circumstances from time to time which are really hard, whether loss, sickness, or family relationships. How are we

From the Publication Department

Joan Chittister, a Benedictine nun, author, speaker, and international leader for peace and justice, has written many books, and we have some available at reduced prices (see catalogue);

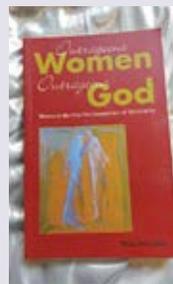


The Breath of the Soul – Reflections on Prayer

Following the Path – The Search for a life of Passion, Purpose, and Joy

The Gift of Years – Growing Older Gracefully

Uncommon Gratitude – Alleluia For All That Is (with Rowan Williams)



Outrageous Women Outrageous God – Women in the First Two Generations of Christianity: by Ross Saunders – “An analysis of different episodes enables us to see these women as influential individuals” says Professor Alanna Nobbs, Macquarie University, Sydney.



Books from the Elf Help series, both the larger books designed for children and the small pocket-sized books for adults are available. Check the catalogue for more titles. Some may not be available, due to downsizing our

warehouse, but please ask. *Hello, God* by Marion McCall OAM is in stock, as are devotional books for personal use or to give as gifts.

Christmas Cards, children’s Christmas books, Advent Calendars, notecards, cards for all occasions and MU supplies are all available.

Some tea-towels have been in short supply due



to lockdowns. Any queries, please contact me at mupublications@sme.com.au

Rob Kennedy,
Publications Manager

to rejoice, to pray and to give thanks? A good idea is at the end of the day to write down three things you have been thankful for that day.

And this takes us back to the real significance of Christmas, when we remember that by his grace, the Lord Jesus became poor for us in order that we may share his riches. His poverty was in leaving his heavenly riches and becoming one of us. But it included, of course, his death for us on the cross.

It is only when we think of such things that we can rejoice, pray, and give thanks. No matter what troubles we are in, God is greater and more powerful than our troubles. As Christians, we see the world through what Jesus has done for us. Thanks be to God!

Christine Jensen

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the joy, peace, help and blessings that you give to us each day. Thank you for this wondrous world filled with all the wonderful gifts you have given to us.

Thank you for our families, friends and the fellowship of your church. And we thank you for the most wondrous gift of all – the forgiveness of our sins, bought for us by the love of your most blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

*Kilskeery & Trillick Mothers Union,
Province of All-Ireland, in Dear Lord...*

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'Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!' – 2 Corinthians 9:15

Almost 40 years of my working life were in banking. The busiest times of the year were over Easter and during the month of December. For me, personally, these holiday breaks signified the observation of the witness of the birth and death of Jesus. However, for many customers Christmas was the 'silly season' of moving at great speed, preparing for parties, attending end-of-year functions, shopping for the perfect gifts, overspending, putting up decorations and cooking. It was a continual rush, rush, rush, with many saying they would be pleased when Christmas was over. The new year couldn't come around quickly enough, as for many it was their time to enjoy well-earned annual holidays, especially to the beach. How sad it sometimes all this made me feel when this was their interpretation of the festive season.

As Christians, Advent and Christmas are far more than all this. They remind us of the first Christmas, when something very special happened; the gift of the birth of a baby, in a humble manger, bringing us hope, joy and goodwill to overcome evil. Each year we continue to celebrate this wonderful event in our church calendar.

Growing up on and around farms I always loved the lambs, even having one as a pet. I can recall bottle-feeding them, when for various reasons they didn't have the support of their mother. When Tony and I purchased a home in Avoca in the Victorian Pyrenees, the house came with a mother and lamb, which were household pets of the seller, but which, sadly, they needed to leave behind. The sheep were kept in a large and safe grassed quarter-acre area, having plenty of food,

an open shed for protection from the heat and cold and a water trough. However, they still relied on us and we really enjoyed being able to engage with them. As we cared for our sheep, we were often reminded of the Christmas story, as baby Jesus was born to become the Good Shepherd, with the people as part of his flock.

How very symbolic it was for the shepherds to receive the glorious angelic announcement of the birth of Christ – shepherds who were just staying in a field, on a starry night, keeping watch over their sheep so they would be safe from night predators. The story tells us they were frightened, but the angel Gabriel reassured them, 'do not be afraid, for I bring you news of great joy'.

God clearly saw significance in the role of shepherding. In Biblical times, shepherds played a vital part in keeping sheep safe and healthy, important as they were in supplying food, clothing and shelter. God also used the term 'shepherd' to describe the leader of his people in both the Old and New Testaments and the word 'sheep' is mentioned more than 500 times.

During this second year of living with Covid restrictions and lockdowns, as Christians and members of Mothers Union, we again need to remind ourselves we are also shepherds and must take on the responsibility of caring for those people who are within our own families, our personal and daily lives, our Church and the wider community. Each year Christmas is a time to especially remind us of God's wonderful gift to us and the seed which has been planted in us to share his love, compassion and understanding to all.

One lovely carol, which dates back to 1703 and tells the story of the first Christmas, is often sung in services of 'Nine lessons and carols'. It begins,

While shepherds watched their flocks by night, all seated on the ground, the angel of the Lord came down and glory shone around.

May the joy of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, the worship of the wisemen and the peace of the Christ-child be yours, this Christmas and throughout 2022.

Denise Lay



Photo credit: Ben White on Unsplash



Moving from uncertainty to trust in God with faithful expectation

You don't need me to remind you that we are living through uncertain times. As I write this article, people are speculating about what will happen if access to venues including churches, is predicated on being vaccinated. Already some people are facing the prospect of losing their jobs because they have not taken the opportunity to become vaccinated for COVID 19. Others are saying "Don't plan anything because we might be in lockdown!"

The seasons of Advent and Christmas give us the opportunity to look outside our own uncertainty as we focus on the biblical accounts of the birth of Jesus. Try to imagine the uncertainty for an ordinary Jew living around this period in history. These Israelites were living under Roman rule with the presence of occupying soldiers a daily feature of their community life. Additionally, they were at the whim of local rulers like Herod Antipas. As a Jew educated in Rome, he had to be seen to keep both the Romans and the well-to-do Jews including the high priests on side. This sometimes led to fickle decision making that impacted the lives of local people. On top of this uncertainty, the Roman Emperor ordered a census. Not the online version that we recently completed, but one that required men with their families to return in person to their city of lineage.

This decree must have troubled Joseph, knowing that Mary would need to make this journey in the late stages of her pregnancy, a potential threat to the life of both mother and baby. Mary would need to walk most of the way as the donkey is the pack animal and only able to carry her for short distances. What if Mary went into labour? There was no access to hospitals or birthing centres along this road and the likelihood of finding a skilled birth attendant was negligible (a situation faced by some worldwide MU members living in rural areas). Yet, Joseph was a man who listened to God. He had already responded to God's message by taking Mary to be his wife, trusting that the child to be born, was of God. Joseph would have known the scriptures and been assured of that God would take care of them as he recalled passages such as Isaiah 41:10 and 13



10 Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God;

I will strengthen you; I will help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

13 For I, the Lord your God, hold your right hand; it is I who say to you, "Do not fear, I will help you."

There were many more uncertainties along that journey and in Bethlehem, not the least being the likelihood of finding accommodation in a city already bursting with others who were there for the census and their own reasons. Then there was Mary, now in labour. Birthing was strictly women's business usually attended by female relatives and if available, the local midwife. Yet, we know that none of the usual was happening here. Joseph must have again faced uncertainty as he was called upon to assist with the birth of our Lord, then later to leave everything and flee to Egypt, turning his family into refugees.

However, through all these uncertain times, God was there for Joseph and Mary, as he is for us today. So, in these seasons of Advent and Christmas, let us focus on the wonders of God and the blessings we have received, drawing on our hope and trust in God to manage any unfulfilled expectations and to lead us forward into new ways of seeing the world around us in 2022. May we use this Christmas-tide to praise God, worshipping with trust and in faithful expectation.

Robin Ray



Hope for a new normal?

For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.

Psalm 9:18

I saw Jess while I was shopping in our local Woolworths yesterday. Her hand hovered over a can of crushed tomatoes for a while before dropping to her side, empty. She greeted me with a friendly smile and remarked on the weather- a perfect spring day. I asked if she had time for a coffee. She hesitated, looked longingly at the café but shook her head. 'I'd better not. I owe you one but we'll do it another day, OK?'

I understood. I didn't press her because I knew she had made up her mind. She wouldn't accept another coffee until she could be the one paying and that might be some way off. She is one of the people who didn't qualify for any extra assistance and yet wasn't getting any shifts at her part-time job. She'd confided to me some time ago that she often had less than \$20 left from her welfare payment after she paid her rent and phone bill. She needed the phone in case she got that all important call to come in to work. She described herself as an 'almost.' Almost employed, almost homeless. The Parish Pantry was her lifesaver.

There are many people in our community, more than one in eight adults and one in six children, who live below the poverty line. The poverty rate in Australia is worse than in most other wealthy countries. It is worse than in New Zealand, Germany and Ireland, according to the figures from the OECD. Although the single rate of the Age Pension (plus Pension and Energy Supplements) is \$10 per week below the poverty line; it is much higher than unemployment or youth allowance.

We look forward to spending time with our families at Christmas, for many of us the first time in a while. Some have lost loved ones in heartbreaking circumstances; some have lost homes and livelihoods. For some life will not have changed much at all. The pre-pandemic problems are still with us.

An interesting panel discussion at the Anglicare Annual Conference led by Gareth Hutchens, ABC

News business and economics correspondent, examined the future of work in times of upheaval. The panel spoke about the government policy of deliberately keeping wages low and the growing need to introduce a liveable wage. Psalm 9:18 reminds us, 'For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.'

As we look towards a return to 'normal' perhaps we can hope for a 'new normal', where concerns about poverty and homelessness, climate change and inadequate aged care are addressed. I hope next time Jess goes shopping she doesn't have to agonise over the purchase of a can of tomatoes.

Proverbs 23:18, 'Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.'

Susan Skowronski



Photo credit: Emil Kalibradov on Unsplash

Prayer

Lord God, we are amazed when we reflect on the intricate preparations that you have made from the beginning of time for the coming of the Messiah in humility and for his coming again in glory. We worship you, God of history and eternity.

Mothers Union Prayer Diary 2021, p.64 Used by permission

Children's ministry through YouTube



For over a decade I have been coordinating the children's ministry program in St John's Cathedral, Brisbane, and looking after the children's areas which are available for children and families to use whenever the Cathedral is open. Last year, when we were first locked down because of Covid 19, we had to decide what to do about our interactions with children. At the Cathedral we have always felt that children need to be part of the whole worshipping community, but that they are a group with particular needs. When we meet face-to-face that need is met by giving them their own area in the worship space where they can meet, build community and experience God in a way that is unique to them without separating them from the congregation.

We decided that the best way for us to continue our interaction with them was via Facebook. This is a medium which is familiar to them and most of them are accustomed to talking with relatives via FaceTime or other social media platforms. So, since March 29, 2020 I have been making short videos every week to welcome children into the cathedral space, let them know we are missing them and that we care about them. I do a simple craft activity that can easily be replicated at home and tie it in to the gospel story for the week. While we were in lockdown for many weeks, I also posted short videos mid-week, exploring the whole cathedral precinct including the roof, bell towers and spiral staircases. For me this was a little challenging at times because I do not function well at heights! These videos were all very popular and the roof top and bell tower videos were seen by many hundreds

of people (counted by the hits on the site). Using Facebook also meant that children could reply to the videos, ask questions and show me what they were doing. While we were in lockdown over 250 people were watching the videos every time. We also posted the videos on YouTube. This meant that they were available to people who did not use Facebook and, because they were listed with our other services, could be watched at any time. Many of our families watching the morning services on YouTube would automatically watch the children's video as well.

We have decided that, going into the future, we will continue with the Sunday videos because people are still watching and responding to them by posting comments. We have found that many of the people watching are adults. Some are older adults who have minimal interaction with other people, especially children. Others are parents and grandparents who use the crafts with their children and grandchildren. We know that children continue to watch the videos and, for some in this group, it is their only interaction with church and the message of God's love.

The videos are also a great way for us as a group of adults leading children's ministry to communicate. It means that the leaders for the day can watch the video before they arrive at church and be better prepared for what they are doing and what they are talking about with the children.

Our hope for the future is to purchase some form of electronic tablet that can be mounted or fixed in some way in the children's area so that any child who visits during the week can access the story and message for the week. Each video also gives them ideas for what they can do in the area and lets us share God's love to them.

Ann Solari
Brisbane Diocesan
Member AMUA





Earthiness and holiness

Every great Christian season has at its heart the undeniable fact of life – that human beings are earth-bound and spiritual.

CHRISTMAS brings us back to the stable – such smelly places; who on earth would want to sleep in one, let alone give birth there? But desperate times mean desperate measures.

Most of the world's babies are probably born under similar circumstances. So that is just one aspect of the Christian story that makes Baby Jesus a human for all races and conditions of men.

CHRISTMAS brings us into a time of holiness – the heavens testify, with angels heralding his birth, the wondrous Star lighting up the sky is a sign.

Photo credit: Tim Umphreys on Unsplash



CHRISTMAS was also an ordinary time when an ordinary person carried on in the self-absorbed manner that is usual with a full house and a minimum of pity and imagination for the pregnant and travel-worn couple.

CHRISTMAS was an ordinary time for the lowest paid workers and the extra-ordinary travellers. Both these representatives of society were prepared to shift their thinking and their bodies to explore something new.

If we are prepared to move our sights and minds and hearts, what wonders may we find? Were we to examine what we do about the Season what might we see? What might we realise? What might open to us?

For there is ALWAYS more to discover, to grow into, or out of, more likely!

Are you an inn-keeper? A shepherd?
A wise woman?

Do you need to sharpen your wits? Or ponder what Christmas means theologically?

Archbishop Rowan Williams has said, 'Remember Christianity is a contact before it is a message. God is at work, God is communicating himself in flesh and blood, from the first moment Mary embraces her child. God is at work in this presence even when Jesus is saying nothing in particular and doing nothing in particular.'¹

Christians believe that the birth of Jesus was God's action of love in history, as in the words of the Nicene Creed

The only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

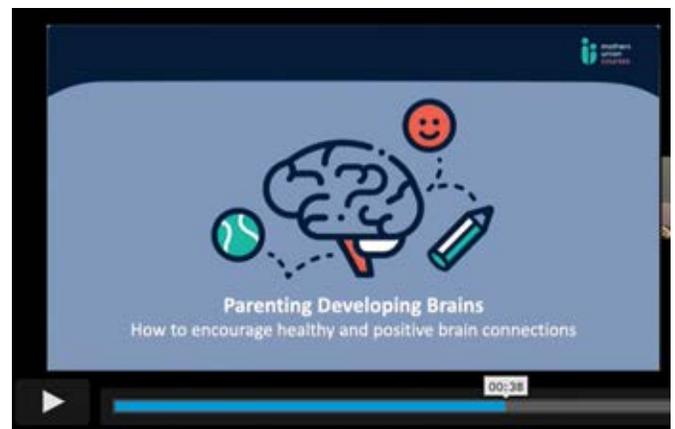
Williams says: 'What is alive and at work in Jesus is the first and unique 'product' of divine love ... And the relation of that divine reality to God the Father is not only like that of a child to a parent, it is like

Mothers Union Sydney moves into the online world for parenting courses

The worldwide pandemic of Covid-19 has produced so many changes in all aspects of our lives and Mothers Union Sydney was not exempt. In relation to our parenting courses, we ground to a sudden halt, and for many months didn't feel we had the capacity to think outside the usual practice of face-to-face seminars. As we watched more and more events being adapted to the online world, we began to explore what a Zoom parenting course would look like.

On paper it does seem that our reluctance highlights an unwillingness to move with the times and to adapt to the situation. However, part of the hesitancy was the potential loss of the community nature of both our parenting course and single session seminars. One of the key foundational principles of our courses is that we do not parent in isolation, and we need the support, encouragement and ideas of those around us as we raise our families. Indeed, God in his church has created the idea of a community where we do not function as isolated parts.

Our courses are designed to bring together groups of parents, care-givers, grandparents and those involved with children to share their collective wisdom, to learn together, to encourage one another and hopefully to continue to do that long after the parenting course has finished. A course run via computer screens with people



that of one flame to another ... light one candle from another, and you don't have any less of the first flame and you do have a flame as bright and hot as the first.' *Tokens of Trust*. 69.

Poet Ben Jonson (1573-1637), Shakespeare's contemporary, wrote this carol, which is full of theological statements and teachings.

1 I sing the birth was born tonight,
The Author both of life and light:
The angels so did sound it;
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

2 The Son of God, th'eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,
And freed the world from danger,
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Lord which heav'n and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

3 The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no "No,"
Both wills were in one stature;
And, as that wisdom hath decreed,
The Word was now made flesh indeed,
And took on Him our nature.

4 What comfort by Him do we win,
Who made Himself the price of sin,
To make us heirs of glory!
To see this Babe, all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence--
Can man forget this story?

I would love to hear what you have noticed in Ben Jonson's carol. First clue is 'Author'. Yes, it does = creator. So, Ben is saying Jesus is fully God and fully Man. Another clue is that the shepherds 'were' afraid BUT 'they searched'. Keep searching and growing, dear friends.

Do have a wonderful and blessed Christmas.

Lesley McLean

¹ Rowan Williams *Tokens of Trust: An Introduction to Christian Belief*. WJK Press, 2007. 92-3.

potentially zooming in from anywhere in the world is less likely to create that encouragement and much less likely to have interaction after the seminar or course.

And yet, there were and are advantages to a Zoom parenting course. We have found that we are more likely to get the fathers attending, there is less stress on the parents to be out the door to get to the course, there is less cost for the parents (no babysitter fee) and people who may not be able to access a course have more options to join. So, we trialled a seminar and realised we could join the online world of parenting courses. So, equipment was purchased and training conducted on Zoom techniques.

To date we have only run our single session seminars online, but are willing to run our four-week Families Equip course online. The seminars have been requested by churches and so still have some of the potential for building a community for parenting beyond the seminar.

For the future, as we emerge from lockdown to a largely vaccinated world, we will retain the option of Zoom courses. Our preference will be face-to-face for all the obvious reasons. However, the option of Zoom is helpful and is needed.

We also can see that some people may choose Zoom for their group of parents so that both parents are more likely to attend and to expand the reach of the course. Mothers Union Sydney is also planning to link our parenting seminars and courses with our Christian Parenting Australia Facebook group. We will advertise seminars regularly for this closed group and see how God uses this to support and equip parents.

God has blessed us with technology and ironically, we are more adept now at using this to support and equip families because of pandemic. In God's economy nothing is wasted, and he works in and through all situations for his will and purpose.



Ann Cunningham
Mothers Union Sydney
Parenting Course Developer
& Educator

Practical love in the context of ageing and dementia

Over the last two issues of Mia Mia we have looked at why we should care about older people and what the Bible has to tell us about the value of the older members of our communities. We have been reminded that older people are of great value, much loved by God, and that we are called to love older people too. Now it's time for practicalities. How can we effectively care with and for older people and those living with dementia? Basically, we need to practice the three P's – prayer, presence and pastoral care.

Prayer

Since God is the source of our ability to love, all of our life, and particularly our ministry, needs to start and be continually fuelled by prayer. Just as, when starting a driving holiday the fuel tank needs to be filled up, and then topped-up along the way to power the trip, prayer is the fuel for ministry and it is needed before, during and after to enable us to love. Indeed, even when we cannot physically visit, we can and should be praying.

Presence

Which brings us to our next 'P' – presence (aka turning up!) Too often, due perhaps to a fear of not knowing what to do or say or to the hectic pace of life, we can neglect presence. Yet presence is so powerful, particularly for older people and people living with dementia, because of the isolation which so often accompanies these challenges.

I suspect most Christians have done door-knocking at least once and have found that their visit isn't always welcome. By contrast, most older people living in residential care or at home are desperate for a chat, cuppa and relationship. Or consider it another way, if a person sleeps for 9 hours and spends 4 hours per day attending to the tasks of daily life such as eating and bathroom activities, there are 11 hours left to fill. If you are in good health, then this may not nearly enough time to do all that you might want to do. If, however, you are living with some level of frailty, then how do you spend all those hours (77hrs per week)?

Moreover, if you are house (or facility)-bound, and particularly if you are single, then how many people will you see each day? Even in a residential facility where you may see a number of people, the staff are busy and other residents may be hard to relate to. In such a context the value of a visit, which doesn't need to be long, is incredibly high. Often multiple short visits are more effective than less-frequent extended visits. This is especially true for those with moderate to advanced dementia.

Given the realities of distance, not to mention Covid 19, it is important to engage with the reality that physical presence is not always possible. Thankfully, we live in a time with multiple non-physical options. The first is 'snail mail'. Everyone likes getting mail (except bills), so consider postcards, letters, goodies to eat, books, DVDs – the list goes on. One resident I know received a box of fruit each week, thoughtfully organised by her son, who lived interstate. Not only did it increase her fruit intake, it gave her the opportunity to give to others. What a great gift!

Another option is phone calls. These do not need to be long; indeed, my own grandmother would stop most calls after two minutes with 'I know this is costing you' (despite multiple assurances I had unlimited calls on my mobile plan). A big advantage of the quick call was that I could make it even if I had just a few spare minutes. On the topic of phones, there are now a number of very simple phones which have been designed for older people. If your loved one doesn't have a phone and is in a facility, very often the facility will have a phone which can be taken to the resident.

Finally, there is a plethora of internet-based options – email, What's App, Zoom, Skype. If your loved one can work an iPad, then I recommend buying them one and sending not only text, but photos and videos, which allow the person to both reminisce, review and act as a 'brag book' to share with others. If your loved one is in a facility, staff should be able to assist in the setting up video calls and may be able to print photos.

Pastoral Care

I am very aware that the idea of 'pastoral care' can be intimidating ('But I'm not a pastoral person' you may think), but basic Christian pastoral care is not rocket science. It starts with a relationship



with Jesus (we can't share what we don't have), is powered to prayer ('Lord, help me') and is typically expressed relationally (which typically start with presence). So, if you have got this far though the article you're well on your way!

So perhaps it is helpful to examine some of the *don'ts* of pastoral care:

- Don't be afraid to get help. Being willing to say 'I don't know what to say' and referring someone to an expert is a sign to wisdom, not failure.
- Don't say 'I know how you feel' – you don't!
- Don't expect to visit for extended periods.
- Don't assume that no mention of Jesus makes a visit, or indeed a number of visits, worthless.
- Don't defend God. We demonstrate His love by listening.
- Don't give up. Pastoral ministry is a marathon, not a sprint.
- Don't forget to practise self-care – burnout is not a mark of success!

While this list may seem a tad scary the *do* list is very simple:

1. Pray.
2. Turn up (presence).
3. Love people.

Friends, Jesus loves you and has empowered you to pray, turn up and love people. Jesus will use you when you pray, turn up and love people. In the next issue of Mia Mia I will be focusing on evangelism in the context of ageing and dementia. Until then (and beyond) may I encourage you to pray, turn up and love people.



Ben Boland

The Christmas visitor

I have always enjoyed visitors. Some, such as my grandfather, who came each Sunday for lunch, were expected. Others came unexpectedly, and even though they might come bearing a bucketful of chokoes (nothing was ever thrown out in the 1960s!) visitors were, and continue to be, welcome at our place.

Christmas is about the most wonderful visitor of all time. Who would have thought that the eternal Lord of glory [John 1:1-14, 1 Cor 2:8], the Creator and Sustainer of the universe (Col 1:15-18, Heb 1:1-4) should pitch His tent among us (John 1:14), as one of us, fully human and fully Divine (Heb 2:14-18)? We are the visited planet. It intrigues, and saddens me that we get excited about, and highly prize, pieces of moon rock or meteor dust, because they might teach us about the origins of the universe, when this Lord came and lived amongst us, just 24 average lifetimes ago.

The conspiracy of neglecting the evidence before us is surprisingly unscientific, given how much we prize the scientific enterprise and method. And it is repeated every Christmas. How so? We perpetuate the fanciful lie of the mythical visitor from the North Pole, all the time neglecting the body of evidence for the visitation of God the Son to our planet. To do so does not make any sense, especially since we are glad to accept the public holidays, gifts, family visits and general bonhomie that goes with the celebration of Jesus' coming. But it makes even less sense when even an atheist like H G Wells, could write *'I am a historian, I am not a believer, but this penniless preacher from Galilee is irresistibly the centre of history'* and commented about His influence that *'You can tell the size of the ship by the size of the wake it leaves behind.'*

And what of the pandemic year we have had? Can Christmas help us with that? Of course it can, in many ways including:

We know so clearly that we are loved by God who willingly sent His Son, who gladly came amongst us. His was a rescue operation which, from the time He came, has been resisted by those He came to save (John 1:12-13, Luke 13:34-35). There is no love like this; it is not sentimentality since it deals with our sins ever so justly (Rom 5:8, 1 Jn 1:8-9, 4:9-10). Whatever our losses or sadnesses through covid-19, they do not lessen the love of God toward us in Christ (Rom 8:28-39).

Because Jesus came and took our humanity to Himself He continues to understand our weaknesses, temptations and sadness. They can be brought to Him in absolute confidence, and faced with His help, sympathy and kindness. No person need ever be alone in life if they invite Him to be their Saviour and Lord (as Heb 4:14-16 makes plain).

Jesus understands our grief at another's death – His step-father Joseph and friend Lazarus died. We are not alone when we grieve; we are understood and Jesus can be trusted as we face our own death. We can rejoice in Howard Guinness's words, *'Upon a life I did not live, upon a death I did not die; another's life, another's death, I stake my whole eternity'*. (Jn 5:24, 11:25-26).

But we also know that He will come again and bring in the New Heavens and New Earth, where the pains, injustices and disappointments of this life will cease. Titus 2:11-15 sets this out with economy of words and clarity. There will be no pandemics or death in that Kingdom, and we have grace to help us live godly lives now in this sin-saturated world. Once we have accepted Him as our Saviour, **we are able to experience the sheer pleasure of His visit**, not just for lunch, but day by day. The wait for Him (whether to come again from Heaven or to meet Him when we die) is not at all like the anxious wait in the doctor's or dentist's surgery. It is, instead, the joyful expectation of a loved one's visit. All our Christmases come at once, and remain forever. This beloved Visitor will never leave us in life, will stand beside through death and (most importantly) alongside us at the judgement, ushering us safely into His Father's house, the home of righteousness

[2 Pet 3:13]. Nothing, including a pandemic, need rob us of His presence, purpose and peace since: **Christ Has Revealed In Simple Terms the Means of Attaining Salvation.**



Peter Brain

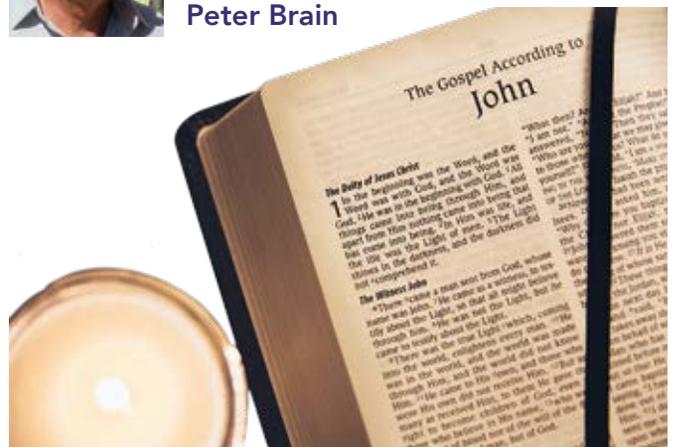


Photo credit: Anthony Garand on Unsplash

News from the Top End



Our Ministry Development Team had spent months planning for a big event in the life of the Northern Territory Anglican Diocese – the week in September for the Indigenous Leaders' Conference with Synod at the conclusion. Clergy and leaders from many of the remote communities began to trickle into the lovely Riyala Bush Camp, about 40 minutes' drive south of Darwin, on the Sunday night. People were tired from travelling long distances in buses and airflights and were content to find beds and a prepared meal waiting.

Five days were spent with clergy and lay people from Darwin, Minyerri, Ngukurr, Urapunga and Numbulwar. Contingents came from Kunbalanja, as well as Groote Eylandt and Bickerton. What I noticed this year was that there was more bonding between the various church communities and people shared more freely about their struggles and hardships in ministry. Each night we heard from a church community and then other different remote representatives prayed for them – often in language.

There was singing in different languages, readings and prayers organised by each community and when we sang 'We are one in the bond of love' I felt great thankfulness that Jesus had brought us together across the barriers of distance, language and culture and that we were all encouraged and built up through meeting together.

In the mornings we were introduced to the process of 'Handling and passing on God's word well'. Tavis Beer and Matt Pearson led us through a process of slowing down the reading of a scripture text, finding the information there and then working out the big idea. Finally, we asked the question, 'So what?' for ourselves and then for our community. The feedback from the participants was positive about these sessions and hopefully people will be able to go home and use this tool in their own communities.

One important session that ran in the afternoons, was the use of the 'Yarning Map'. Kate Beer initially demonstrated how it worked and then people who either wanted to explore different pathways to ministry, or reflect on problems or roadblocks that they were experiencing in their context were invited to join small groups. This very useful tool is currently being used for supervision of clergy and leaders across the Territory.

Some of the other sessions were: preparing for and explaining the procedures of Synod and what the various motions were about and participating in Safe Ministry Training. Naomi Ireland presented a series of Workshops on 'Passing on our faith to children' with creative ideas for teaching children in the remote context with limited resources.

We spent time thinking about forming a representative group (consultative council) that would inform Synod and the Diocese about Indigenous concerns and issues. We decided on the name WALK: each initial means 'word' in the language groups that will be represented on the Council. This is an exciting step in the life of the church here, and will hopefully empower remote churches to have a voice on matters that concern them.

The climax on the Friday night was travelling to the Cathedral for the opening Service for Synod. This was a special occasion because we were launching the new Kriol Prayer Book, that many people had worked on for over 10 years. Bishop Greg Anderson thanked all those who were involved in the translation and for the diligent work that Kate and Tavis Beer had done in driving this project.

What a valuable gift the Kriol Prayer Book will be to many Kriol churches and individuals across the remote communities and in Darwin. We give thanks to our God for the efforts of those who had the vision and who worked to complete the translation, as well as those who generously funded the project.



So, we can say thankfully together – *'Sing the praises of the Lord enthroned in Zion, proclaim among the Nations what He has done!'* (Psalm 9:11, NIV)

Rosemary Snibson

Advent – holding the tension

It is Sunday, October 10. As I sit to write in NSW, many of us are wondering what tomorrow may bring. After being in lockdown since late June, the so-called Freedom Day begins at 12 midnight, when many of the restrictions will be eased, (since 70% of the population is now double vaccinated) and we'll be able to travel more than 5 kms. My husband and I are really looking forward to going to our daughter's home and having a big hug. It's been a loooong time.

Today our church conducted an online poll to gauge reactions to the prospect of opening up and most responded with 'cautious, nervous, hesitant'. A few daring souls wrote 'excited', 'bring it on' and 'YES'. The reality is, we don't know how things will go and what might or might not eventuate. But we hope and pray that the vulnerable will be protected and everyone will be wise and generous, for the common good. It's all a bit tense.

Holding the tension, not seeking or expecting balance, is my preferred way of living as a Christian in this 21st century, in suburban Australia. That is, not neglecting to recognise and appreciate kindness, self-sacrifice, generosity and faithfulness in others, but also not being blind or naïve about humanity and our inherent capacity to do and say terrible things to other people, all made in God's image.

Advent is the season of holding the tension, between the promise of God's final judgement on evil and human wickedness (which destroys that which is good) and the other promise of the return of the Lord Jesus in all his risen glory, to establish his kingdom of justice and to bring in the redemption of his precious people. His words in John chapter 6 'I will raise them up on the last day' have echoed down through the ages and brought courage, thrill and hope to myriads of people, especially those struggling and dying under persecution, violence and deprivation. Not 'pie in the sky when you die', but justice and vindication.

We don't want to be those who trivialise Advent by regarding it as just an interlude before the fun stuff of Christmas. Surely Advent is meant to be not only a time of personal reflection about the wonder of the first coming of the incarnate God, but a time of delving into the scriptures and reading again



what the LORD said through his spokespersons, specifically what He promised about the future; the world's future, even our future.

It's striking to me that the Old Testament prophets spoke on behalf of God, with no apology for doing so. They were compelled to do so and put it in terms of 'This is what the Lord says' or 'The word of the Lord came to ... Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, Habakkuk, Micah...' It's a dangerous and disrespectful mindset that simply regards the Old Testament as cruel or warped; and the New Testament as benign and soft – as though Jesus and the apostles didn't speak and teach hard truths. The Gospel writers – the witnesses who saw and heard Jesus – were not shy or embarrassed about conveying the shocking things He said, including that He was the light in this dark world of fear and failure.

A persistent challenge for all Christians is similar to the comment in John 4:50 about the royal official whose son Jesus healed 'the man took Jesus at his word'. Do we really believe the Jesus who said, in the close of the Book of the Revelation 22:12 and 20, 'I am coming soon'?

It's a matter of faith, isn't it?

Not wishful thinking, like hoping that Freedom Day will go well, nor a leap in the dark nor suspending our brains. Rather it's trusting the truth that 'God has spoken' and He is faithful to his promises. He keeps his word.



And we hold the tension of the 'now' with all its reality, and the 'not yet' of the promise that Jesus will come again, soon.

Janis Donohoo

Remember!

Birthdays and anniversaries can either be a source of great memories, or they can carry with them memories of grief or sadness. They become an integral part of our life's experiences and as we look back and 'remember' so we can look forward encouraged by these memories.

God understands the value of memories in our journey of life, and the Bible is full of reminders to us to 'remember'. In 2 Peter 1:13 we read *'I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body.'* Peter affirms the benefit of remembering the things of God that have come across our paths – *'you will always be able to remember these things'* (1:15). Things such as God's voice from heaven speaking about His son, voices from the prophets as reliable voices, and in 2 Peter 3:1 we read *'I have written both of them [his letters] as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.'* Conversely, scoffers *'deliberately forget'* that God is the creator, and they forget about Noah and the flood or about God's provisions to ancestral families in establishing the Promised Land.

We would all have memories of spiritual milestones in our lives; times when we were very conscious of God's presence or His peace that the world cannot give during a time of grief or trial. These memories form an essential part of our story, a story that cannot be taken from us. The stories recorded in the Bible, going back in history as far as four thousand years ago, are stories that do not need to be repeated in action because they are recorded in text. They are recorded for a good reason – to enable us to 'remember'. As we get older, it is these memories that God wants us to pass on to other generations.

Psalm 71 is a great encouragement Psalm for older people. Take particular notice of verse 18, *'Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come.'*

Significant, world changing events recorded in the Bible have been remembered throughout history, and continue to be remembered today. The Passover, while occurring in a small region of Egypt and involving a band of people in slavery,

was to become an earth-changing event that continues to echo throughout history. We read about it in Exodus chapters 12 and 13, and note God's reasons for the annual commemoration (or reminder) of this unique event. *'In days to come, when your son asks you, "What does this mean?" say to him, "With a mighty hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.'* (Exodus 13:14)

It was during the annual celebration or commemoration of this event that, in God's perfect plan and timing, *'The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said 'This is my body which is for you, do this in remembrance of me.'* (1 Corinthians 12:23-26) Perfect timing! Jesus voluntarily gave up His life at the very celebration of that Passover in Egypt some 1500 years before, and in so doing initiated another form of remembrance. What do we remember? We remember the culmination of God's 'Plan A' for the redemption of mankind. Why do we remember this? To pass on our declaration of the power of God to the next generation.

Heed the warning in Deuteronomy 6:12 *'be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery'; 'refresh your memory'; 'do this in remembrance of me.'*

John Cronshaw



Photo credit: Morgan Winston on Unsplash

God, with Mothers Union, does it again!

'Conference for us is a reminder and encouragement that we are not alone. We are part of team, young and old, proclaiming the gospel in the North West. Thanks, MU for your support, it is greatly appreciated'. Karratha

'Please thank the MU who organised and donated funds, bedding and snacks for us all. It's good to see that the North West Diocese has such a good support group; an indication of their like-mindedness for the centrality of Jesus and His Gospel. Well done, and thank you'. Geraldton

'Thank you, MU for your partnership with us in the Gospel. DNWA Fellow Workers' Conference was a wonderful time of fellowship, encouragement and refreshment for our whole family. We thank God for your financial generosity for travel and the provision of food and bedding'. Port Hedland

'It has been an absolute blessing from MU to be able to attend the FWC. They provided a super warm doona for me and a cooler one for my husband (like they knew our body temperatures!) and catered to my dietary requirements with yummy snacks (gluten free). Without MU, FWC could definitely not be as comfortable and homely'. Wickham.

'I loved the opportunity to spend time getting to know women I rarely see because we live so far apart. It was so encouraging to share how God is working through each of us in our different ministries'. Geraldton.

'Fellow Workers Conference is a rare opportunity for all the ministry families of the North West to get together and encourage one another. It's also a real joy to see all the kids having fun and growing in Christ. The contribution of MU to this event is greatly appreciated and makes a very practical difference to all who have the privilege of attending this event.' Exmouth

Each Fellow Workers' Conference, the families, especially those from above the Tropic of Capricorn, express their great appreciation to AMUA for its generosity through the Overseas and Northern Outreach Fund. It is only once every 2 years that all the families in this vast Diocese can be together; families from the north-

west rarely leave their parishes other than for their annual holiday.

At Conference, clergy wives love to share with each other, clergy children play with each other and ministers relax with each other. There's also time to catch up with our Bishop, the Registrar, our Financial Officer, the Administrator from the Diocesan Office and our Property Manager and his wife, who directs the Safe Church training in Geraldton. About 80-90 persons were there in all.

All the adults participated in Bible talks online with the previous Archbishop of Sydney, Glenn Davies, studying 2 Corinthians 1-5 and the ministers' sessions enabled the sharing of highs and lows, Safe Church training and discussion of Diocesan matters. There was a Primary-aged children's programme each morning, followed in the afternoon by a fun activity time – face-painting, balloon twisting, playdough and games, and one day, a bouncing castle! High School students attended CruWest (formerly Crusaders) camps from Tuesday to Friday and had a wonderful time. We had an amazing chef, who was helped by some of the senior students and volunteers.

Geraldton MU members sent down goodies for the morning and afternoon teas, which were added to by Perth branches of MU, who besides cooking biscuits for us, gathered linen, blankets, pillows and towels for the families from the Pilbara and the Kimberley, who flew to Perth for the Conference. You will have seen from the comments above that it was quite cold at night, especially for those folk, and they were all so grateful for thoughtful MU members who added extra blankets and doonas. Thank you, God, and please bless Perth President, Kaye Healy, who with her husband Rob, and Lois McGrath, organised, delivered and collected the linen, cakes and biscuits too, to enable our ministry workers of the North West Diocese to enjoy to the full the 2021 Fellow Workers' Conference.

Jocelyn Ross, Geraldton



Faithful servants remembered



Beverley Ovens

Beverley Ovens died suddenly at her home on Sunday, September 19, 2021. Her death came as an enormous shock to her family and friends. Bev was very involved in MU ministries and

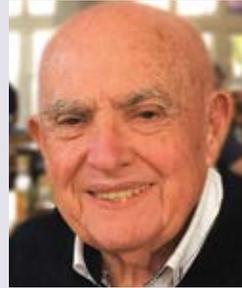
at the time of her death was President of the MU Branch in Bowral, Sydney Diocese. Previously, she was Overseas and Northern Outreach Coordinator both in her diocese and for Australia.

As a young woman, Bev trained as a nurse and went on to study at what was then called Deaconess House. After her training she served with CMS in Murgwanza, Tanzania. Bev had been a member of MU for many years and after her retirement from nursing saw more opportunities to serve God. She commenced a ministry to Sudanese women across Sydney diocese. With intention and enormous commitment, Bev made solid friendships with the leaders of the Sudanese community. Over more than 10 years, 3 branches of Sudanese members were formed and Bev supported these groups, driving over 100 kms each way to attend each of their monthly meetings on Saturdays. From that initiative Bev was asked to minister to a Chinese MU group and a Multinational MU group in the parish of Auburn.

Many years ago, Norma Dumbrell commenced a Bible teaching ministry to MU members in Yangon, Myanmar. After some years Bev joined Norma with that ministry and in later years with others. With diligent Bible preparation and using skills first learned as a missionary, Bev has devoted herself to Mary Sumner's vision 'to win the homes of the nation for Christ'. Many of us who knew Bev well could testify to her energy, determination and her enormous sense of fun and hearty laugh as she served.

God equipped Bev and gave her opportunities to serve Him. We thank God for her life and servant heart and we give Him the glory.

Jan Livingstone, Sydney



Denis Hagan

Denis' interest in Mothers Union started at an early age, as his grandmother was a founding member at St Johns', Fremantle, which is where MU commenced in WA in 1898.

In 2001 Perth MU were in desperate need of a Treasurer, and after some coercing from his wife Alison, (the then Publication Convener), Denis accepted the job. Little did he know what lay ahead! He completed 6 years' service and then continued for a further 3 years. In 2017 he started another 3 years, and when that was completed, he enticed his daughter, Peta McLean, to take it on.

During the MU Australian elections in 2003 Denis agreed to become the Australian Treasurer and for the next 6 years very capably held the position. His extensive knowledge of business and finances was very helpful to both Executives.

Denis would always contribute his pearls of wisdom to whatever was being discussed. He always said, 'Money sitting in the bank should be used to support our projects.' He appreciated that reserves are necessary, but not to the detriment of the Aims & Objects, which he believed in wholeheartedly. We do indeed owe Denis a great deal.

During our 6 years together on Australia Council Denis and I spent many hours in airports and planes, and I appreciated his sense of humour very much.

Denis was very proud of Alison and their extended family and it has been a privilege to get to know them all over the past 20 years or so.

Denis died in Perth on September 30, 2021, aged 87. To Alison, Joanne, Tony, Peta, Nicky and their partners, grandchildren and great grandson, our deepest sympathy. He will be greatly missed by his MU 'harem'.

Lois McGrath, Perth

Blessed and used as BCA Nomads

John and I first heard of Bush Church Aid (BCA) in July 2005, when Rev. Graeme Hodgkinson (then Regional Officer for BCA in Queensland and Northern New South Wales) preached at St Paul's Cathedral, Rockhampton, a congregation we had recently joined. As a result, we offered to become Box Secretaries. A number of parishioners joined up to receive (money) boxes, and we still continue in that role.

We became interested in the annual Bible Week held at Bribie Island, and attended the one in August 2007 which featured the late Bishop Tony Nichols and his wife, Judith. Their powerful teaching changed the direction of our spiritual lives, renewing us, and pointing us towards the relationship with Jesus that we needed to have, and the commitment to mission and evangelism that we were seeking. What a blessing that week was, a turning point in our spiritual journey! We have continued supporting BCA, using the Prayer Diary and *The Real Australian* magazine, so naturally became aware of BCA Nomads.

Our dream to become BCA Nomads grew. God supplied us with a motorhome that we could afford in 2014, and in 2017 we became Nomads No 259. We set out on an investigative trip in December, visiting James and Brittany Daymond in Narromine, and taking part in the weekly prayer meeting with the evangelism team. We had Christmas at Lightning Ridge with David and Joanne Piper and their 3 boys, and John was able to do some jobs while we were there. The experiences confirmed that BCA Nomading was what we are looking for. We also found we needed to get an air-conditioner in the motorhome!

In 2019 we took John's long-service leave (as a school bus driver) in Term 3, plus the holidays either side of it, and set out to travel around a lot of Australia, with visiting BCA ministry centres our main focus. We planned to be at each place for up to a week, including a weekend so we could join in Sunday worship. Our first stop was Nungalinga College in Darwin, then Kununurra, Broome, Port Hedland, Newman and Kalgoorlie.



Wherever we went we were able to help with yard work and cleaning, and joined in whatever activities were going on in the parish – Sunday services, barbecues, op shops, prayer meetings and Bible studies. We also had time to do plenty of sightseeing. In Port Hedland and Newman we were able to stay on-site at the church grounds which had been planned to accommodate Nomads!

From WA we travelled to South Australia to visit relatives, then headed into NSW, where we stayed at BCA House, Broken Hill, with the Harradines. We even shared breakfast with Greg Harris, BCA National Director, and his wife, Karen, on the morning we left! We later had coffee with Neville Naden in Dubbo and a quick catchup with James Daymond, by then living and serving in Narromine, which concluded our visits with BCA families.

We enjoyed visiting the clergy families, in meeting people we pray for regularly, learning a bit about what life is like in such remote places, and how they reach out to the communities they serve. Sometimes it is the fellowship, worship and prayer that is appreciated by those we visit, and we have learned a lot. In places like Broome and Broken Hill, where there are indigenous services, we have been so encouraged by the spirituality of our brothers and sisters. We have also experienced something of the varied conditions in which so many live.

Now that John has retired, we hope to set off again next year to visit many other BCA centres and help

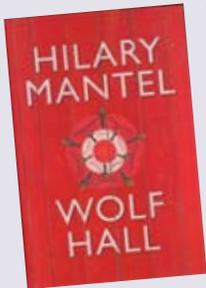


in whatever way we can. Naturally, it is still very difficult to plan any travel, but our dream to serve as BCA Nomads in our retirement is still very real.

Noelle Frazer, Rockhampton

From my bookshelf

With summer often being an opportunity to spend time relaxing, perhaps with a good book, I invited Judith Nichols, her daughter Naomi and grand-daughters Hannah and Eleanor, to share one of their favourites with us. CB



The Wolf Hall Trilogy

Hilary Mantel

The first two books in this trilogy by Hilary Mantel won the prestigious Booker Prize. These are books to savour. The description of places, character and mood are exquisite, written with an economy of words.

The narrative is typified by subtlety and wit.

The story traces the life of Thomas Cromwell, the son of a blacksmith, a man of ambiguous dealings on the Continent who rose to become Henry VIII's Chancellor. Despite his eventual downfall he set England on a stable political and financial course at a time of turmoil.

Although I did not always agree with all Mantel's conclusions, her characters are fascinating as they plot and counterplot, not only for power, but often their very lives. Cromwell is sympathetically portrayed as a manipulative yet brilliant politician with a humane understanding of what motivates humans, even his enemies. Further, he has an intense loyalty to his friends. A convinced Lutheran, he affirmed Britain's religious independence from European papal dominion. Some historians portray Henry VIII as the Stalin of the 16th century, but here we have a nuanced picture of a formerly golden youth gradually going to seed; his grip on the throne open to challenge, and desiring respect not least from his succession of queens.

Mantel usefully shows that the Reformation, while primarily motivated by spiritual reasons, also included those who saw it as an opportunity to reduce the power of the Church, and advance politically, while others found the study of the Scriptures merely intellectually interesting. A challenging, but fascinating, read.



Dr Judith Nichols was married to Bishop Tony. They have 4 children and 14 grandchildren. She was Diocesan President of the North West and a member of MU Australia Executive

from 1994 to 2004 as Education Officer and Senior Vice-President. She still speaks at MU gatherings and runs workshops. For 20 years she and Tony ministered with CMS: in Indonesia; with indigenous Australians at Nungalinga College, and training candidates for cross-cultural ministry. She also taught at Trinity Theological College, Perth. Currently, she leads Bible Studies at St Lawrence's Dalkeith, teaches Greek and mentors lecturers from Indonesian Bible Colleges.

A Gentleman in Moscow

Amor Towles

This is my favourite novel I have read in the last 10 years as it reads like a Russian masterpiece without the tragic ending. In this book, beautifully crafted by Towles, we witness Russia post the Revolution and into the era of Stalin as told through the imaginary life of the fictional Count Alexander Rostov. Spared the death sentence because of his having had a significant revolutionary poem attributed to him, the Count is put under house arrest in the Hotel Metropol. We see the world come to visit the impoverished Alexander, because of his not being able to leave the hotel under threat of death. A great variety of characters walk into the hotel, either as guests or staff, and are met by our charming and sophisticated hero, who teaches them what nobility and patriotism truly are. Throughout the book the reader is reminded of the atrocities and hardships that Russians faced during the evolving era of communism, but we are protected from heartbreak through the humour and optimism shown by Alexander and his relationships. Not everyone we get to know survives, nor does our hero always triumph, but despite the rollercoaster of loves and losses we are never without hope that all will be well in the end.



A Gentleman in Moscow is a book to savour and persist with, as it leaves a lasting impression of an epic tale joyfully told.

My name is Naomi and all of a sudden, I am middle aged! I am firstly a Christian, secondly a beloved wife to Tim and mother to 3 lovely young adult girls and thirdly a Critical Care Nurse. I love fun, friendships and fiction.



Naomi Flavell

Naomi's daughter, **Hannah Flavell**, tells us why she loves the 'Jungle Doctor' series. Hannah is in her penultimate year of university. She is a Christian and an avid reader. She lives in Perth.

The Jungle Doctor series

Paul White

I heartily recommend Paul White's *Jungle Doctor* series. An exciting and enjoyable read, they are based on his experience as a missionary and doctor in a Tanzanian hospital.

I recommend them for ages 10+, due to occasional Swahili (new vocabulary) and some descriptions of witchcraft, violence and medical procedures.

I grew up reading this series, and I think it was helpful when rejecting perceptions of Christianity as a 'white man's religion'. The books teach about medicine, language, culture, and especially, God. The workers often share the gospel with their neighbours, usually in the form of culturally specific stories with *dudu* or *simba* or other animals. These are a lot of fun!

I enjoy the *Jungle Doctor* books because they show the hope the gospel brings and the love it inspires. We see character's struggles to live Christian lives and serve God in their contexts. For many of them, this means working in the hospital, conducting operations, treating diseases, giving vaccinations and educating about health. The books have plenty of humour and there's never a dull moment, with wild animals and natural disasters and dangerous people and spreading epidemics putting pressure on the hospital. Christians can expect to face real suffering, especially many African Christians. The books are honest about that. This is done gently though, with kindness and without being gory or digging for shock value, and with lighter moments in-between. This is why I still enjoy reading *Jungle Doctor* books today.'



Hannah Flavell

More Than a Carpenter

Josh McDowell, Sean McDowell

More than a Carpenter is a short book that addresses many of the common 'science' or 'reason' objections people raise about Christianity through the lens of the author's own personal journey towards becoming a Christian. The fact that he begins as a resolute atheist means that he goes back to the fundamental questions that underpin Christianity and is able to frame them in a very logical, unbiased way. 'Can we trust the Bible?' 'Did Jesus actually claim to be God?' 'Hasn't science disproved Christianity?' 'Why can't all religions be true?' Ultimately though, he arrives at the heart of the issue – the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christianity itself lives or dies on this point. If Jesus rose from the dead, then, relatively speaking, nothing else matters. Jesus' claims about his identity and the forgiveness for sins that his death enables for those who trust in him (and only him) must be true. While this book is short and does not cover everything, it is a remarkably succinct, well-rounded and consistent evaluation of Christianity; powerful in its simplicity and pursuit of the truth.



It was significant for me because it kick-started a more thorough investigation of my own faith and brought about an awareness of how necessary it was for me to critically evaluate why I believed what I did. It's also been a wonderful book to give to non-Christian friends who are investigating Christianity – in some cases it has been a springboard for discussion and for others the final push.



Eleanor Parker

I grew up in Northern NSW in a family of 6; I have 3 brothers. My Dad is an Anglican minister in the Armidale Diocese and my Mum juggles a part-time job for a surveyor with parish life and Mothers Union involvement. I studied chemistry at the University of New South Wales and now work for a Biotech company in Sydney that does 3D Bioprinting. I love going to St George North Anglican Church, playing Ultimate Frisbee and swimming at the beach.

Tweens and the M movie dilemma

Here's a dilemma faced by many parents and grandparents: when is it OK to let their older children see the latest super-hero movie?

These movies (think *Spider-man*, *Avengers*, *Fantastic Four* ...) are usually classified M. This means they are not recommended for viewing by under 15s, but they are often promoted to tweens (9-13) and even younger. Such promotion can be via linked products such as T-shirts, pyjamas, bedding and items like backpacks and pencil cases. This often occurs months in advance of the movie's classification and release, and so the expectation is cultivated in children's peer groups that this is a movie for them (after all, the characters are already part of their world!). And then we all hear the plea 'but...everybody is going to see it!'

So what's the harm if they do? Here's one major concern: most of these films feature 'glamorised' violence. This is violence performed by attractive heroes in a seemingly valid cause: they are good at it, they are applauded and rewarded, and their actions are seen as justified. There can often be comic undertones, so not only is the violence 'honourable', it is also amusing. Reliable research says that such portrayals can increase the risks that the young get the message that violence wins and, therefore, violence works. It increases the likelihood that they will choose to use aggression to solve their own conflicts. What a message to be giving the young!

Attitudes to the use of violence and aggression developed in childhood can be expressed in actions like bullying, and can persist and show themselves in adulthood, contributing to issues like

domestic violence. Reducing children's exposure to glamorised violence warrants inclusion in Government and community violence-prevention strategies.

While the M classification is a signal to beware of risky content, it has no legal force (unlike MA15+) and so, many children well under 15 years are exposed to such violence. While ignoring the M classification is a problem in itself, the bigger problem is that the classification system doesn't give enough information for carers who are looking to make informed choices of movies for their children.

But help is at hand: *Know Before You Go* movie reviews are a useful tool for parents and grandparents. These are prepared by the Australian Council on Children and the Media's team of reviewers, who all have child development expertise. The reviews provide a synopsis of the movie's content, identify any problematic issues, and make recommendations about age-appropriateness.

Many parents and grandparents have used these with their children from an early age as the respected reference point for decisions about movie choices. These reviews, which, like all material on the ACCM website are available at no cost to users, have helped carers to give reasoned arguments as to why this movie is not a good choice right now, but maybe is one that can be enjoyed more fully when they are older.

Know Before You Go reviews are useful at any age to resist the plea '...but everyone is seeing it!' They can be found on ACCM's website:

www.childrenandmedia.org.au



Barbara Biggins

Avengers: Endgame



Short takes

Not recommended under 13, PG to 15 (violence, distressing themes, language, alcohol)

Age 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15



Photo credit: ACCM, used by permission



Over the Fence

Our new home was a place of constant intrigue and discovery.

Built in 1919, the vicarage was late-Federation in style, with wide verandas and superb natural ventilation features that made modern-day devotees of energy efficiency look like amateurs. Hot summers were passed comfortably with not a fan in sight. To be fair, winters were harsh, a fact that the eight fireplaces testified to. Each July there was a predictable period of seasonal short-lived novelty as the frozen grass turned to desiccated coconut and transformed our dogs into four-legged lamingtons. Other daily delights included kicking the chicken's waterers to crack the thick layer of ice that had formed overnight, and observing forlorn items on the clothesline, swaying in a melancholy, neglected, sort of way, stiff as a board.

We had arrived in the parish a year earlier. Our appointment had happily transitioned from assistant minister to vicar, and the parish had embarked on an extreme make-over of the vicarage. Kitchens and bathrooms were being transformed, walls were being painted, and fences were being erected with humbling goodwill and remarkable speed. For over 2 years, we joined this army of volunteers, spending many a weekend stripping wallpaper, restoring architraves and uncovering original floorboards, buried for nearly a century under a layered terrine of lino, floor staples and black tar.

During these times, items from a bygone era made their appearance. Our 7-year-old daughter extracted an 18-carat gold necklace from behind the mantelpiece. A glass vial of opals was dug up from beside the side verandah. A whole midden of broken porcelain and bent silverware emerged when the plumbing was put in – presumably the secret burial ground used by guilty housemaids and cooks hard-bent on concealing everyday accidents.



Photo credit: Markus Spiske on Unsplash

The rich black soil in the generous yard led to a different source of discovery - the realisation that with very little skill I was actually able to grow things. Anything. In went sunflowers, oxheart tomatoes, snow peas, pumpkins, zucchinis, eggplants, carrots, cucumbers, strawberries and beans. I delighted in this patch, yet remained puzzled over the occasional complete disappearance of an immature vegetable. I increased surveillance. An unprecedented overnight disappearance of some 50 half-grown pumpkins led to a competing discovery – our Beagle was a closet vegetarian! Blissfully unaware of that most-feared of gluttonous canine conditions – gastric dilation and volvulus – our Beagle lay stretched out in the sun, his mounded abdomen gently rising and falling, contained within it dashed hopes of pumpkin scones, pumpkin soup and other pumpkin-based delicacies.

I turned my attention to more encouraging things. It was a fresh sunny morning, bright and crisp with any threat of a rogue late-September frost having well-passed. I had planted corn in the approved fashion, paired seeds dropped into holes arranged druid-like in a circle. I sat on my haunches, just looking at the beautiful soil and thinking of what it would bring forth in the fullness of time. A minute movement caught my eye. A tiny piece of soil had moved. I looked more closely. Nothing. Then, wondrously, with quiet, Herculean strength a corn-shoot unfurled and shouldered the overlying heavy black soil to one side. As if exhausted by the effort, the bright green shoot rested, remaining bowed, strong and curved.

I stayed where I was, transfixed by the extraordinary thing I had just witnessed. Vegetarian Beagles to one side, I had every reason to be hopeful of a wonderful crop. This igneous soil, produced in ages past by volcanic eruptions of heat and liquified fire of unimaginable force, now lay quiet, rich and fertile. It was the immovable, geological history of this soil that gave the novice backyard gardener such hope. My efforts were, by comparison, insubstantial. My hope lay in this soil, and this soil alone. I sat still, feeling the warm sun on my back. As I thought about our new role in this parish, I felt a great sense of relief. The agrarian parable was obvious: my hope that God's kingdom would

increase in our town did not lie in my small efforts but in the immovable, historical bedrock of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

To God be the glory, great things He hath done.

'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade - kept in heaven for you.' 1 Peter 1: 3 - 4.

Virginia Grice

Tomorrow

Lord, I'm not anxious for what
tomorrow may bring,
for I have You to walk beside me
I have You to guide me through each day

I have Your strength when I am
at my weakest,
I have Your patience when frustration
overwhelms me

I have Your comfort and peace,
when the battles rage
And I have Your courage...
So why should I fear?!

I have Your endurance, perseverance...
When the moments feel like
endless struggles

And I have Your assurance when I find
myself in doubt,
or second-guessing myself

So I place my trust, my hope, my faith in
You... ONLY YOU

For You give me so much....
You give me blessing for my burden
You give me purpose for all my pain

So I will not be concerned, nor worried
about tomorrow

About all the challenges I will face...
Because I will not face them alone!

I know that if You take me to it,
You will take me through it!
Through to the other side!!

Gwen Wright

'Away from it all' holidays in Gippsland

The Abbey Raymond Island, a Centre for Spirituality and the Environment, and a place of Hospitality on Raymond Island, Gippsland, was the venue for three 'Away from it all' holidays in 2021. Thanks to grants from AMUA's Disaster Relief Fund, eight families affected by the recent floods and bushfires in Gippsland, or who had experienced other traumatic family events, were able to enjoy five days of fun, relaxation and healing.

A team from the parish of Heyfield and members of The Abbey staff made sure that there was plenty of opportunity for people to rest, relax and talk over matters big and small as much or as little as they wished. In the words of Rev Edie Ashley, Abbey Priest, 'They formed a magnificent team given to offering welcome, with care and wisdom, to all families and young people who participated in the MU Families Times ... Without exception, on all three Family Holidays, participants expressed their thanks for the ministry of David and Deb Chambers and Rev. Judith Lake... [who were] confidants to the various adults, teenagers and younger kids who came along. Parents all spoke about how wonderful it was not to have to cook, or to think about food, or to wash up ... but rather, just to turn up and all was prepared for them! And as they said their good byes each family was given a 'doggy bag' ... prepared dinner for a couple of nights! Thanks again for the opportunity to offer this ministry in partnership with the Anglican Mothers Union of Australia.'



Encouraging faith and hope

'Something's going on inside me', I said to my wife. 'I'm not sure what I'm feeling but I don't like it anyway'. In my work I experience many feelings; the majority of them belong to the person I am with. I have collected them because I work empathically with others. This was my own feeling though, and I did not like it.

I had noticed that I had lost concentration, lost my usual bounce and lost a sense of purpose. It felt like a net curtain at the window that filtered the light coming in and distorted what I could see outside. I felt neither flourishing nor despondent. Reflecting on this was not self-indulgent introspection, but a necessary 'awareness' task so that I could maintain effectiveness in my work. Just as we do not want blunt pruning secateurs to spoil the stems of the roses, so we are each called to maintain a high level of self-awareness so that we can be the best person we can be and help others effectively.

So, I wondered, what was this strange feeling that felt so tiring and treacherous? Then I came across an article from the New York Times by Adam Grant. This feeling I had was called 'languishing'. It is a sense of stagnation and emptiness; like an absence of well-being. It includes a sense of loss for what we have previously been able to do and a sense of grief for the patterns of life we liked to experience as 'normal'. There is a longing for happiness, for connection to another and for productivity. The emotion can come from the long-haul effects of social restrictions and daily

numbers of illness and death that have created some fears and griefs in many of us over the past months. Psalmist David wrote frequently: 'How long O Lord?'

Understanding this feeling will provide the first tool in our kit for sustaining ourselves and supporting others. If we are to re-build hope and confidence in others; we have to re-build it in ourselves first. Giving a name to this emotion starts to reduce its power to disturb us. So, when I'm asked how I am going; I reply that I'm experiencing a feeling called languishing. Discussing this enables the person who asked to identify it within themselves.

Next, try to become fully absorbed in a meaningful challenge or connection. Spend more time on the phone or Messenger with the children and grandchildren, listening to their stories and celebrating their triumphs, and enjoy laughing with them too. Spend more uninterrupted time in some creative activity and give away the outcome. Your neighbour will deeply appreciate a small box of home-made and decorated biscuits.

Next, set yourself small and achievable goals and challenges. If you like lists of tasks, then allocate future dates to do them. If prayer is just too difficult because of distractions, then write down the distractions and use them as items for prayer the next day. God wants us to pray as we can and not as we think we should. Pray for yourself that God will lead you out of the valley of shadows into his mountain-top of hope and confidence.

God calls us, his fragile children, to bring his hope into a hope-hungry world. We are to see hope in apparently hopeless places or situations, then voice that hope by being ourselves and, perhaps, even using words. Learning to become a hospital chaplain was a time of change for me. I had thought I had to speak a lot of Christian words, competently quoting scripture, but found only platitudes. I discovered that what the patients really wanted was for me to be present with them – but what did that mean? For me, it started with taking a very broad view of being a human and being willing to stand alongside the person in their struggles in the here and now. I am physically close as I sit beside the bed and emotionally close by offering empathic listening, holding an open



Photo credit: Sabine van Erp on Pixabay

mind. Initially, this felt too passive for me, until my mentor explained that I was being actively kingdom-minded. Jesus demonstrated how he was bringing in the kingdom by being a servant to those who needed him for restoration, healing and wholeness. The action of complete presence is where the person can be fully heard and feel fully known, which in turn allows them to not feel alone in the suffering, pain or treatments. At that moment Jesus' hope and love overflows through me to the patient bringing comfort and peace.

As members of AMUA, and as followers of Jesus, we carry God's hope around with us only to give it away as much as we can. We are called to support those whose lives need rebuilding after knocks and losses. We affirm our members to encourage their faith and hope. We offer random acts of kindness to our neighbours to bring God's light and hope momentarily into their lives. 'Do not be afraid' are words frequently said by God to his children. We actively trust these words when we meet the difficult issues of healing and wholeness.

Peter Dyke

O Perfect Love

Shall it be
from your head or your heart?

Is love an action?

Is love an emotion?

Is love something we touch?

Is it learnt?

Is it earned?

OR

Is love given?

With love we can share

With love we can care

With love we can have understanding

With love we can respect

But the love we have
with Jesus

Is the greatest of all.

Wendy Rode

Around the dioceses

ADELAIDE

Happy 125th Birthday!

Members of Mitcham AMUA in South Australia celebrated 125 years with a dedicated service followed by prayers around the refurbished MU garden. Branch President Jill Wotton interviewed 3 senior members and Adelaide Diocesan President Marion McCall congratulated Heather Geytenbeek on her 65 years of service. Members shared memorabilia and extra photos from previous events were shown on the screen.

Here are the members, (temporarily) unmasked, on the terrace at St. Michael's Church, Mitcham, South Australia.

Cynthia Kennedy



BENDIGO



With much planning, arranging and re-arranging in an effort to create the ideal opportunity for members to meet together to welcome the Rev'd Andrew Howe as our new President, Bendigo members were 'hope filled'.

However, with the way things have been in 2021, it was just not to be. Although the commissioning took place on the planned date, August 25, 2021, it was by Zoom rather than face-to-face. We were thrilled that Australian President Anne Kennedy was able to participate in Andrew's commissioning, along with approximately 50 members, who took part on laptops, computers and mobile phones. It was very different to what had been planned but worked very well. It was a challenging time for everyone, but Andrew has stepped into his new role without hesitation. Sadly, we are still waiting to be able to hold a Mothers Union gathering to enable members and Andrew to enjoy being together to discuss plans for the future of AMUA Bendigo and to celebrate.

Ronda Gault

BRISBANE



Bramblebay members have been busy making squares for rugs to give to the homeless. Six rugs have already given out in the local area of Redcliffe. Pictured are 80 squares ready to be made up.

Gill Bust

Chermside

'I will be your God throughout your lifetime – until your hair is white with age. I made you and I will care for you. I will carry you along and save you.'
Isaiah 46:4



After being cancelled twice because of COVID, Chermside AMUA were thrilled to host a 'Nonagenarian Morning Tea' for their members aged 90-plus, and others from within the parish and beyond, on Saturday September 4, 2021.

Father Daniel opened our gathering with prayer, giving thanks for our special guests. Bubbles and orange juice flowed, followed by a scrumptious morning tea. The cake (a double storey 'flyaway' sponge) was cut by our oldest member, Joyce Stanton. Guests were asked to bring their favourite trio (cup, saucer and plate) and to share its story. We also welcomed Joan Kruger, a long time AMUA member, who held many roles within our Diocese and was Secretary to Australian President, Olwyn Jull, when they organised the wonderful World Conference in Brisbane in 1979. Many old friendships back to Young Wives days were renewed. We give thanks to God for the opportunity to honour these special people.

Margaret Coombs



From left to right: Joyce Stanton, Marcia Scholes, Joan Kruger, Val Kerr, Joy Mann.

Maryborough

Members of St Paul's AMUA have been busy crocheting knee rugs for the Palliative Care Ward at the Base Hospital. These rugs are given to each patient and then handed to the respective families to take home with them in memory of their loved one.

Members have also been making Utility Bags which the Hospital Auxiliary fills with colouring books, pencils etc. for children at the hospital. These have also been a great success at the Covid Clinic keeping the children amused while their parents wait the allotted time.

Hilary Vale



BUNBURY

What an exciting morning we enjoyed with the St George's Dunsborough congregation, for the commissioning of a new Mothers' Union Branch in the Bunbury Diocese. Four members of the Busselton branch attended and witnessed the Diocesan President, Wendy Mabey, present to the Dunsborough members a MU Prayer book, a MU badge and a copy of the World Wide 2021 Prayer Diary.

The branch chairperson, Judy, was overjoyed that two MU members from her former branch in Carine in Perth, extended their holiday to support the formation of the new Dunsborough branch at the service on July 25th.

Well done to all those who have chosen to join our wonderful world-wide organization. 'Sharing Christ's love by encouraging, strengthening and supporting marriage and family life.'

Mary Watts, President Busselton Branch



GRAFTON

In the Grafton Diocese during 2021, it has been very much a case of as one local government area comes out of lockdown another has to settle in for a week or 10 days of isolation, so it is very hard to keep track of what our MU members are doing. We are very much looking forward to coming together at the end of November when we plan to meet in our Cathedral (our usual meeting halls having been taken over by the Local Government elections). We've made it a Christmas themed day where we can share our favourite Christmas memories of times past or what we may have planned for the coming Christmas season. Having been stopped or disrupted in the past couple of years by fires, floods and COVID we're hoping it will happen and be a happy occasion.

Gae Shorten

PERTH

Among the recipients of grants from the AMUA Northern Outreach Fund is the Diocese of North West Australia. This grant enables the clergy families from the vast north-west of WA to attend a biennial Fellow Workers' Conference, which is usually held in Perth. For the last 2 conferences AMUA members in the Diocese of Perth have assisted the Mothers' Union members in the Diocese of North West Australia to provide cakes, biscuits and slices for participants' morning and afternoon teas during the week-long conference. Perth branches have also helped by providing linen, blankets and towels for families who need to fly from their remote locations to Perth. In these ways Perth branches, who have prayer links with the North West clergy families, were able to assist their prayer links in very tangible and practical ways. We in Perth are also grateful to God for flexible thinking which has resulted in the formation of a new branch. Members of the Quinns branch encouraged the working members of their congregation to begin an evening group in order to introduce them to Mothers' Union. I was recently able to attend one of these meetings, during which time was spent in discussing just what Mothers' Union is all about and how this new group might carry out the objectives of Mothers' Union. It was a loud and boisterous evening, with plenty of laughter and good fun. I look forward to being able to participate with this group in the future as they learn

more about Mothers' Union and work out how they would like to, and are able to, participate.'

Kaye Healy



Lois McGrath and Rob Healy unload goodies for the Fellow Workers' Conference

THE MURRAY

Members of **Southern Vales** branch have held several meetings in public places. Over the past few months, they have had a time of prayer and a short meeting and coffee in the Information Centre at Morphett Vale. On October 18th, members from Southern Vales and Southern Suburbs met together. A day of sunshine gave smiles to all as we arrived at the McLaren Vale Visitor Centre about 11am. Cuppa's were ordered before President Trish welcomed everyone. Trish, our rose expert, brought along a beautiful red rose, *Fragrant Cloud* and her special green rose buds, *Viridiflora*, which were of interest to all. She handed out cards and asked all to write down our hope for today. Before we completed the task, we introduced ourselves, as there were many new faces among us. Animated conversation flowed before turns were taken to share our thoughts about our hope for today and for the future. 'Today's' thoughts included having an enjoyable time of fellowship together and the 'future' thoughts pertained to the settling of the world COVID situation, peace throughout the world, enjoyment of each day and of God's creation.

A service time followed, with all sharing prayers for the world and environment, and special prayers for those known to us. At the close of the service a walk around the beautiful grounds was taken before lunch. Conversation continued, but all too soon it was time to head home.

Helen Cook





FLAME TREE

Flame tree
ablaze in the driveway
heralds the Christmas Season

No tinsel, no baubles
Nature's beauty supreme
expression of joy

A myriad tiny red bells
festoon each branch.
Fallen flowers
embellish gardens
and transform pathways

Red carpet welcome –
come and celebrate!

Susan Skowronski