

MIA *mia*

WINTER 2020

ANGLICAN
MOTHERS UNION
AUSTRALIA





President:

Reverend Anne Kennedy
Email: ppmuaustralia@telstra.com

Secretary:

Mrs Lyn Middleton
Email: muaustsecretary@telstra.com

Treasurer:

Mrs. Marilyn Robey
Email: muausttreasurer@telstra.com

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

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

Editor:

Christine Brain
Email: miamia@muaustralia.org.au

Printed by:

Snap Printing
18 Neil St, Toowoomba Qld 4350

Graphic Design by:

Cuccovia Design
Email: cuccoviadesign@westnet.com.au

Websites:

www.muaustralia.org.au
UK: www.themothersunion.org

Cover Photo:

Trees in fog - Anglican Diocese of Bendigo
Used by permission

Mia Mia Vol 103 No 4 ISSN 1326-7701



Member of the Australasian Religious Press Association

© Copyright: No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission

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:

Building hope and confidence
in times of trouble

Deadline for next issue:

30 June 2020

Meet Our Contributors

SIMONE BOSWELL

Simone is married to James and they have six children, with 3 married, and 3 grandchildren. Her background is in high school music teaching, from which Simone had a break for 20 years to homeschool the children. She has been involved in parenting ministries for 25 years and published two books: 'Calm Baby Confident Mum', and 'Cyberparenting' with husband James. Simone and James live in the beautiful Illawarra and love to get stuck in a good book.

JOHN CRONSHAW

John Cronshaw – aka 'Buspa the Grandpa with the buses' – has been contributing to Mia Mia for close to ten years under the heading Buspa's Corner. John is the founding director of a tourism company based in the Blue Mountains of NSW, and still works in that company leading tours around Australia and internationally. He was on the council and executive of the Bush Church Aid Society (BCA) for 30 years, and has written several books, including the newly-released 'What is Your Plan B'.

SHEENA EDWARDS

Before retiring Sheena worked as a librarian, social worker, counsellor, supervisor and university social work lecturer. After retirement she has found that her passion for helping people get the skills and information that will help them live more effectively has led her to start a group called 'Switched On Seniors iPad group', where seniors gain confidence in using the iPad so that they can participate in a society which is increasingly dominated by the digital world. Sheena lives in Perth, W.A.

VIRGINIA GRICE

Virginia is married to Peter, and together they have five almost-grown children. She enjoys her job as a vet, long, solitary runs, scoring for her children's cricket matches and leading music in church. Virginia lives in Geraldton, W.A.

Contents

From The Editor's Desk	4
Over the Fence	
Virginia Grice	5
Easter - The Most Significant	
Christian Event	
Reverend Lesley McLean	6
'Do not be afraid'	
Reverend Anne Kennedy	7
Hope In An Anxious World	
Christine Jensen	8
Here I am lord, I come to do your will	
Denise Lay	9
The CCM Mothers Union Programme	
Builds Hope and Confidence	
Robin Ray.....	10
Keeping Families Safe	
Susan Skowronski.....	11
Building Hope and Confidence	
Buspa's Corner.....	12
Technology: The Good, The Bad	
and The Ugly	
Simone Boswell.....	14
A Very Different Easter	
Reflections From Our Executive	16
Mind the Gap!	
Margaret Hodgkinson.....	18
Switched On Seniors	
Sheena Edwards	20
The Away From It All Scheme	
In Australia	
Jan Malpas.....	21
Around the Branches	22
Diocese of Adelaide	
Marion McCall.....	24
Diocese of Willochra	
Jane Tanner	25
Diocese of Bunbury	
Margaret Rennick.....	26
Diocese of Perth	
Kaye Healy.....	28
Diocese of the Murray	
Jocelyn Williamson	30
Diocese of North West Australia	
Gladys Sutton	31



CHRISTINE BRAIN

From The Editor's Desk

Welcome to the Winter 2020 issue of Mia Mia. In continuing with our theme, 'Building hope and confidence' I had intended to focus on issues to do with our living in a fast-changing, digitally-dominated world, never for a moment thinking that we would find ourselves dealing with the coronavirus pandemic-confined to home for most of the time and practising social distancing when out. Whether we like it or not, the online world has become our lifeline. However, for many of us it is still bewildering or frightening, and so I hope you find the articles by Simone Boswell and Sheena Edwards helpful. In the midst of this worrying time, we have celebrated Easter, and several of our correspondents help us to see how God is not limited or thwarted by coronavirus or anything else. As usual we have news from around the dioceses, focusing particularly on the work of AMUA in Western and South Australia. In this time of 'lock-down' it's good to

be reminded that AMUA members engage in many projects which support their churches and communities and we look forward to the time when we can all resume our normal activities.

When the prophet Habakkuk faced puzzling and troubling circumstances which caused him to wonder what God was doing, he was able to commit himself and his nation to God, trusting him to do what was right and good. His words, 'Though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Saviour. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights' (3:17-19) have been the testimony of countless people down through the years. I trust that this might be your experience and testimony, too, not just at this time, but always.

Happy reading!

Christine Brain

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 or The Producer, Sandra Chambers.



...and off!

Although life wasn't always going hummingly, it was at least breaking into harmonious song on a fairly regular basis. Three years of communal living at Bible College had led to the sure expectation of at least one nourishing chat a day, the promise of cooked meals and the high likelihood of being presented with a novel (and very public) parenting challenge on a daily basis.

We had arrived at college as new parents, carrying the predictable baggage of neurotic attention to sleep times and not a lot else. We had navigated through the necessary cycles of almost ridiculous initial two-way deferential politeness with our fellow students – 'Would you care for the salt?' 'Oh no, you first.' 'Oh no, I insist, you first.' 'Oh, I couldn't possibly; after you,' to the more honest middle period, 'Please pass the salt; if there's actually any left after you've finished with it', finally emerging into what could be called the robust period: (tersely) 'Give me the salt.'

We were aware that we were coming to the end of this rich preparatory phase of our lives. However, I felt a familiar tug of unwillingness. I had thought that after three years, communal living would have well and truly lost its charm, yet relationships had flowered and I felt myself wavering, wanting to stay in this community of believers, sheltered from the harsh glare of scrutiny that would accompany the years of ordained ministry lying ahead of us.

God knew I needed a rocket. It came unexpectedly on a fresh morning. Our little boys played cars together. A load of nappies, pinned proudly on the communal clothesline, waved and spun in the breeze. I took myself off to have a shower, enjoying thinking about absolutely nothing.

The shower curtain was ripped across by a small, sturdy arm. The owner of the arm fixed me with an unblinking gaze, and thrust a cake tin into my wet

hands. 'Mum said to give you this,' it said, before turning on its pink-sandalled feet and letting itself out. I stood there, mute, wearing nothing but the facial expression of the village idiot. I reflected that no bathroom designer anywhere had ever thought of providing a shelf in a shower that could accommodate a ring-tin.

In one swift and decisive moment, God had acted. I was done with communal living. I was ready to go. I had mentally packed up the DUPLO, farewelled my friends and family and given my notice at work before my hair was dry. I could never have anticipated that the single most helpful event in preparing me to embark on a life of ministry with my family would have involved nudity and bake ware.

That day, the words of Isaiah 6:8 became mine: '...I said: Here I am. Send me.'

Virginia Grice



Illustration: Freya Grice



Easter THE MOST SIGNIFICANT CHRISTIAN EVENT

The good news of Easter this year undoubtedly filled us with joy but probably also tested us because it could not be observed in the way we have always done, by gathering together to celebrate Christ's resurrection and the new life it brings.

Nevertheless, God is all-encompassing and as the mystical body of His Son, whether we meet in person or not, we can be assured that the whole body of Christ is joined together in offering praise and thanksgiving. This prayer¹ gives us some images to explore.

God of resurrection

Bright morning star

Lord of the dance

Leap of faith

Stillness of joy

**Bless us this day and all who
journey with us**

GOD OF RESURRECTION

H.A. Williams invites us to know the Resurrection 'as the context for Christian living – the atmosphere...in which every Christian lives and moves and has (their) being.'²

We celebrate Easter because we are people of the Resurrection, given the opportunity to regroup, because, as Williams puts it, 'too often we do not stop to recollect God's power, we are so busy gauging our own capabilities.' (p.7). He warns that 'once the church concentrates its attention upon the excellence of its own machinery, it will almost certainly forget that all its power, its very existence, depends upon its having been called into being by God, so that its sufficiency is always and only from Him.' (p.9).

**God of Resurrection may our hearts
and minds and bodies be awakened
to the new life you give.**

BRIGHT MORNING STAR

The gospels begin their Easter message with light shining in the dark, 'Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark...' (John 20:1). The planet Venus shines in the sky before sunrise. Its appearance therefore heralds the coming of a new day while it is still dark. This is exactly what Christ does. He is the light shining in the darkness, announcing the coming kingdom of God while the world still groans under the curse of the Fall. He is the first to be resurrected—the 'firstborn of the dead' (Colossians 1:1).

LORD OF THE DANCE

C. S. Lewis, author of the Narnia books and other volumes of Christian writing, is acclaimed as 'undoubtedly the greatest Christian writer of the 19th century'.³ His writings reflect his celebration of the dance of life. How we live and move may be seen as steps of the dance of our lives. Dances work so well when we follow the leader. Christians follow the teachings and life work of Jesus.

Sydney Carter, author of 'Lord of the Dance', wrote: '*I see Christ as the incarnation of that piper who is calling us. He dances that shape and pattern which is at the heart of our reality ... Whether Jesus ever leapt in Galilee to the rhythm of a pipe or a drum I do not know... We are told David danced (as an act of worship too), so it is not impossible.*'⁴

LEAP OF FAITH

Come on, take the plunge, stride over into a new world of being and fellowship!

Our Lord Jesus Christ set challenges for his friends, hangers-on, scribes and Pharisees. Think about being on the Sea of Galilee during a storm with Him, or on a hillside with thousands of hungry people, or walking into Jerusalem beside him on a donkey – all of that demanded his followers leap right into a redefinition of the way they would



live in relation to God, embodied in Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man.

**They cut me down
And I leapt up high
I am the life
That'll never, never die
I'll live in you
If you'll live in me
I am the Lord of the dance, said he.⁵**

Living with Jesus brightens up any day, puts a light on every situation, changes the view and one's personality, temperament, outlook on life in general. It is even more fun and more exciting than jumping out of a plane with Indiana Jones.

STILLNESS OF JOY

C. S. Lewis called his autobiography Surprised by Joy. In this book he described his coming to faith as a surprise because he '...gave in, and admitted that God was God, knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England.' (p228-229) 'I know very well when, but hardly how, the final step was taken. I was driven to Whipsnade one sunny morning. When we set out, I did not believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and when we reached the zoo I did.' (p237)

Joy is a spiritual gift, but it needs to be carefully cultivated. When we surround ourselves with agitations and horrors we are like flowers among weeds. Resist distractions and feed your faith with spiritual fertilisers Let us be silent, let us be still in body, mind and spirit and joy will come.

Bless us this day and all who journey with us,

Lesley McLean

Co-ordinator Prayer and Spirituality Department

1 Cotter, J. 2006 Out of the Silence ... Into the Silence, Cairns Publications, Harlech, page 508.
2 Williams, H., 1951, Jesus and the Resurrection. Longmans, , page x.
3 Aldwinckle, S., 1976, Radio Programme about CS Lewis,
4 Sydney Carter, Green Print for a Song London Stainer & Bell 1974 page 86.
5 Carter, page 85

'Do not be afraid'

This is the most common commandment in the Bible, as Rt. Rev. John Roundhill, Bishop for the Southern Region of the Diocese of Brisbane, reminded us in his Lady Day address, streamed across the world this morning, 25th March 2020.

Because of the need to 'stay apart', we were able to join with hundreds, maybe thousands, of MU members worldwide through the wonders of electronic media. Other services were also streamed, and we thank the Cathedrals and Churches for providing us with the opportunity to celebrate the Feast of the Annunciation.

By the time you receive this Mia Mia, there will be more changes. I can't predict those changes, but we must take heart from those words, often from angels, 'Don't be afraid'. We pray for families affected by COVID-19; we thank God for the kindness shown in our communities; as members of AMUA it is our job now to build hope and confidence into the lives of everyone we meet. Drought, bushfires, and COVID-19 – all have had a great impact on our lives. Now is the time to praise God for the strength he gives, and to give thanks for each other and our world.

Stay apart, but keep in touch with each other - until we can meet together again. God bless you all!

Anne Kennedy

Australian President



Hope In An Anxious World

We live in anxious times. Even before the present pandemic a friend of mine who is a doctor told me, 'In general I find anxiety to be a great spiritual and personal difficulty of people today'. What she said is endorsed by other GPs and counsellors.

This is strange because generally we have never been better off or better looked after. But my friend also observed that there is an expectation of perfection. She wrote to me, 'As we do not trust in God who will restore all things from our fallen world and [as]medicine advances, we expect perfection in various scenarios. If not, someone must be responsible and recompense us.' She commented that there was a tendency to blame the doctor if an affliction could not be cured.

You may notice that the doctor said, 'As we do not trust in God...' When I think about my own experience of being anxious, I realise this is the key. I am not trusting God as I could or I should. After all, it was Jesus himself who told us not to be anxious.

Let's hear what he said: 'Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink. Nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? The birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?' (Matthew 6:25-26).

In saying this, Jesus was not being just a sunny optimist. He surely knew pain and struggle and suffering if anyone did. But his faith in God was filled with hope, since he knew that the end would be good. You and I have had difficult times and we will probably have more. But, as I look back

on my life, I can say that trusting Jesus has never been a mistake, and that gives me hope. And I am sure you could say the same.

Hope is a funny thing. It can be no more than a sort of belief that all will turn out to be good in the end. Optimists have this hope. Pessimists don't. But it does not make much difference to what actually happens. Being an optimist or a pessimist does not really change the big challenges we face.

But when we think of hope in the Bible it is something a bit different. For hope is only as good as the person we put our hope in. We do this all the time. For example, if you had really hoped Roger Federer would win the Australian Open this year, your hopes may have been quite strong, but they were placed in the wrong person.

When we trust Jesus, his words give us hope. For example, I have found this invitation of Jesus, with its promise, fills my heart with hope for the present and the future: 'Come to me, all who labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light' (Matthew 11:28-30).

We live in an anxious age because we live in a godless age. When people turn their backs on God and live for themselves, they become anxious, for the future is not in the hands of someone they can trust. It is all down to luck.

But we can walk with the one who said that he will give us rest, with full confidence that he will do for us as he has promised, for he cares for us. When Jesus gave his life for us on the cross, he proved the truth of his love without the slightest doubt.

So, as we trust him, we can be filled with a strong hope.

Christine Jensen

Vice President



DENISE LAY



Willochra Breakfast Club volunteers

Here I am lord, I come to do your will Ps 40:8

At the time of preparing this article we are in the midst of a world-wide epidemic. Our country and communities are not immune from it. The focus on personal prayer within the confines our homes, was and still is, so important.

I believe that as Christians the things we are able to do are God-given gifts, and no matter how big or small, how easy or hard, are to be received through the power of the Holy Spirit. All of us are given our unique gifts to serve God and others in specific ways, both within the church and the wider world. It's not about the size of our gift – it could be something very tiny, but as we use and nurture our gift it becomes bigger, and with it grows our confidence. Whatever we do, no matter how good or how much, we are doing it for God. As branches we must ask, 'Where and how can we collectively use our gifts?' In answering this, it may also be a great opportunity to focus on your achievements and the importance of them.

Mary Sumner looked at her community, saw a need, prayed about it, then acted. We know big things didn't happen straight away, and from what we read, Mary initially lacked confidence in her own abilities. We know her husband, Rev. George Sumner, who later became a Bishop, was a strong voice and advocate in the early years with and for Mary.

Often on Lady Day we also look back over two thousand years to when God's angel came to Jesus's mother, Mary. We know she said, 'I am the Lord's servant ... may it be to me as you have said.' We have wondered and even discussed 'But what if Mary had said NO to the angel Gabriel?'

I am sure Mary Sumner would have been very nervous about forming a small group to fulfil a

need and desire to help young mothers – I wonder if at any point she thought of saying 'NO, I can't do this'? However, both Marys, the Mother of our Saviour Jesus Christ and our Mothers Union founder, knew God was with them. They both responded to His call, sharing the same willingness and eagerness to submit to God's will, which continued throughout their lives.

As members and Branches, our future as Mothers Union is going to depend on how well we align ourselves with God, in doing what we are being called to do. As we now move into 2020, we need to be ready and even willing to change, to move in new directions and maybe to also let go of things that have been significant for us in the past. I am sure our branches have members who can look back over 50, 60 or more years since joining Mothers Union. During those years the world has changed dramatically, and even Mothers Union has changed from the time Mary Sumner first had the idea.

We can look back with thanks for all the wonderful work that has been done through our members over the years, as well as look forward, to see what work we need to do in the future. Our way forward is the way of the Kingdom of God. We need to build hope and confidence in ourselves and with each other in discipleship, where our sights must be turned, not inward on ourselves, but outward into a world of need, where through our aims and objects, we are called to serve. Through our own faithfulness and obedience to God we can do amazing things.

Like our two Marys we need to put our trust, hope and confidence in God, and as we say 'yes' to God, we are blessed by God.

God bless you all.

Denise Lay

Promotion and Development Coordinator



ROBIN RAY



The CCM Mothers Union Programme Builds Hope and Confidence

As I prepare to write this article, Mothering Sunday is approaching, and I think back to the times when I shared simnel cake with my daughter. In more recent years we have not been together for Mothering Sunday; instead where simnel cake is available, I freeze it until we are together. This small piece of cake is a symbol of our shared hope and confidence in motherhood and each other.

Through Mothers Union, women around the world also have a connection that enables us to share hope and confidence in each other, our families, and our communities through prayer and in particular, support for MU programmes. Church and Community Mobilization (CCM) is one of the programmes facilitated by Mothers Union members in low-resourced countries. CCM draws communities together for shared learning and mutual support. As respected members of their communities, Mothers Union leaders are able to be agents for change in ways that are most relevant for their own situations.

The CCM programme works through church members offering friendship, bible study, workshops and prayer to help identify skills and harness experience to build personal confidence and inspire hope for the future of their communities. St Ambrose reminds us that, "Because God is true, friends can be true... God offers friendship so we can be each other's friends".¹ Women gain confidence through each other and by studying biblical examples.

Lydia (Acts 16:13-40) is one example. Given that Lydia sold purple cloth, she must have had a

business that dealt with merchants and those with influence. In verse 14, Lydia is part of a gathering of women. She is open to listening to God's word through Paul and seeking a way forward. She is a person with self-confidence and one that could be trusted as evidenced by her ability to persuade Paul to stay in her home (v 15). She is also a respected woman of action – her whole household was baptized. By verse 40, it would seem that Lydia has a faith community meeting at her home. Quite an achievement for a woman in that culture.

Community group workshops focusing on the strengths in their community empower people to recognise the knowledge and skills they have within themselves to manage their own challenges, as well as identify the needs they have for external partnerships. As an MU partner, the money you donate through the Overseas Fund is used to support MU workers, seminars and training until the local Diocese can afford to support this work for themselves. Communities ravaged by long-lasting challenges such as political unrest, drought, war and famine continue to need our support as they build confidence and hope in their future.

Learning from Lydia's example, women in these Church and Community Mobilization programmes, and we ourselves, can draw strength and confidence to be open to new ideas in uncertain times, to be agents of change in the community. As you work and pray for our MU sisters around the world, keep in mind this text: For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not harm, to give you a future with hope. Jeremiah 29:11, NRSV.

Robin Ray

Overseas and Northern Outreach Coordinator

¹ Chittister, J. 2006. The friendship of women: the hidden tradition of the Bible. BlueBridge: Katonah, page.xvii



Keeping Families Safe

Before the social distancing restrictions were announced, I met a friend for coffee. I noticed she was wearing a lapel pin I was unfamiliar with, right beside her AMUA badge.

'It's my *Thursdays in Black* pin,' she told me. 'You've heard of that campaign, haven't you?'

I'd heard of it. Something to do with domestic violence. My friend enlightened me. Thursdays in Black grew out of the World Council of Churches Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), which highlighted stories of rape as a weapon of war, gender injustice and abuse. The campaign is worldwide and the message very simple – 'a world without rape and violence.'

Many of us are familiar with various action groups such as the United Nations 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence held yearly from 25 November International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women until 10 December, Human Rights Day. Several branches and dioceses have reported their actions in Mia Mia. Did you get involved? Are you planning something for 2020? (Hopefully social distancing will end before November!)

Mothers' Union in Scotland, in conjunction with the Inter-Faith Anti-Trafficking Group, have produced a display of empty shoes called The Souls of our Shoes – A journey into and out of Domestic Abuse. To raise awareness of domestic violence, this display has been widely used in workshops in secondary schools and prisons.

Mothers' Union members around the world are committed to combatting domestic violence whether through practical help to local women or lobbying governments to provide support services for victims and counselling and guidance for perpetrators. Gender-based violence is not confined to our shores.

One in three women globally experience physical or sexual violence, mostly by an intimate partner.

One in four children under the age of five lives in a household experiencing domestic violence*.

This violence is frequently hidden, and victims are often silent, fearing stigma and further violence.

In Australia, approximately one woman dies as a result of domestic violence every week.

People of faith must continue to speak out to ensure women and men, boys and girls, are safe from rape and violence in homes, schools, work, streets and all places in our community.

History tells us there is often a spike in domestic violence during times of emotional or financial stress. We have already seen a huge increase in unemployment, and the government says there has been a surge in the number of Google searches looking for support services for domestic violence during the pandemic.

The federal government has announced extra funding as well as boosting the emergency relief delivered through charities and community organisations, including \$150m under the national domestic violence initiative. This may go some way towards solving some immediate issues but on its own may not be effective in the long term.

We want to bring hope and confidence to women and children suffering abuse. It is important that we continue to pray, to raise awareness, to provide practical assistance wherever possible, and to lobby governments to provide support services for victims and counselling and guidance for perpetrators. We may then realise our vision of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

Most Loving God, whose Son Jesus loved those who were outcast. Help us remember the little ones of his society, the sick, widowed, women and children, unbelievers and sinners. May we take them under the wings of our concern and work tirelessly in Hope and Confidence that your kingdom come. This we pray through the Holy Spirit. Amen

Susan Skowronski

Social Issues and Action Coordinator

*Statistics from UN, UNICEF



Building Hope and Confidence

I am writing in the same study that I have used to write other articles, but under a totally different circumstance. I am in self-imposed isolation—something that I never would have thought about if I had written in January 2020. None of us knows what circumstances we will find ourselves in when this edition of Mia Mia arrives.

Our family tourism business is based in the Blue Mountains of NSW. In the pre-Christmas period, bushfires totally flattened the tourism industry. The fires were followed by heavy rains, railway line washaways and the COVID-19 virus attack. You know the rest of the story. A year's programme of tours, including some to Oberammergau, have been cancelled and a team workforce of close to 40 people has had to be "stood down".

As a Christian, a Christian family and a Christian-oriented business, we are not immune from the troubles of the world. However, because we believe the Bible is the living and active word of God (Hebrews 4:12) we believe that what we read in God's word today, while it may have been penned over two to four thousand years ago, is relevant to living in the 21st Century. We can read a passage of Scripture and find it to be so relevant to our need just for the moment. Bible Reading notes, set months in advance, along with the commentary prayerfully written on the selected part of the Bible, are often just so helpful, hopeful and confidence-building in a current daily need or worry.

My encouragement to you in this and any circumstance is based on Jesus' last words as he ascended into Heaven, recorded in Matthew 28:20 – 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.' Make this your constant prayer, and ask the Lord to give you the hope

and confidence you need to get through each day irrespective of your circumstance.

May I share with you two quotes that have circulated on Facebook that have been a blessing to me.

While facing the deadly effects of the Black Plague that swept Europe 500 years ago, Martin Luther wrote:

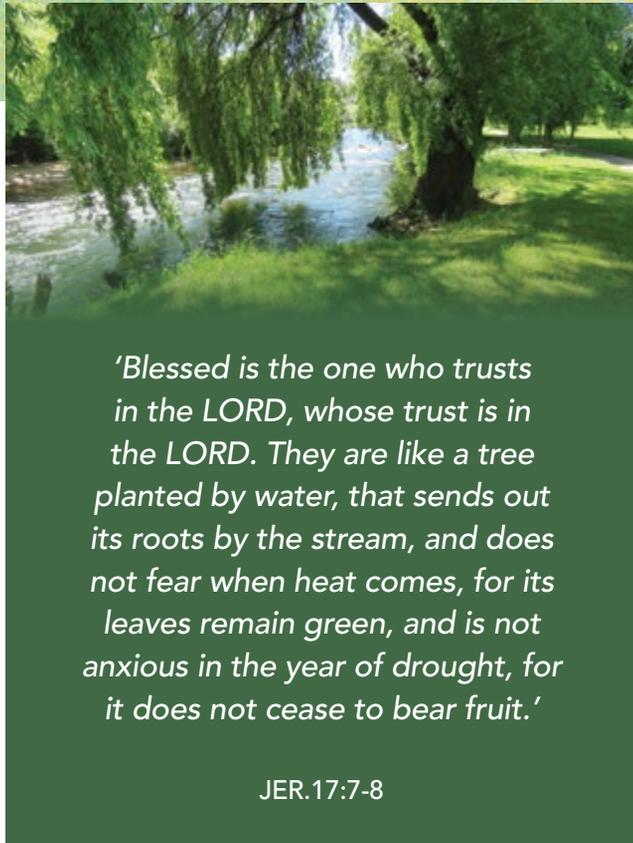
'I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death because of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, He will surely find me and I have done what is expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me however, I shall not avoid place or person. I shall go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God'.¹

Another quote, purporting to be a conversation between Jesus and Satan, although wrongly attributed to C.S. Lewis, still reveals a salient truth – Jesus is still on His throne!

Satan: I will cause anxiety, fear and panic. I will shut down business, schools, places of worship and sports events. I will cause economic turmoil.'

Jesus: 'I will bring together neighbours, restore the family unit. I will bring dinner back to the kitchen table. I will help people slow down their lives and appreciate what really matters. I will teach my children to rely on me and not the world. I will teach my children to trust me and not their money and material resources.'

Our hope in this time of turmoil can give us unlimited confidence to face whatever we face



'Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is in the LORD. They are like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.'

JER.17:7-8

if we build our hope on God's precious word, its principles and promises.

May we take to heart the exhortation from our prayer book:

*Go forth into the world in peace;
Be of good courage,*

Hold fast that which is good, Render to no one evil for evil. Go forth into the world in peace.

*Strengthen the fainthearted, support the weak,
Help the afflicted, Honour all persons. Love and serve the Lord, Rejoicing in the power of the Spirit,*

*And the blessing of God the Father,
Son, and the Holy Spirit be upon you
and remain with you always.²*

Amen.

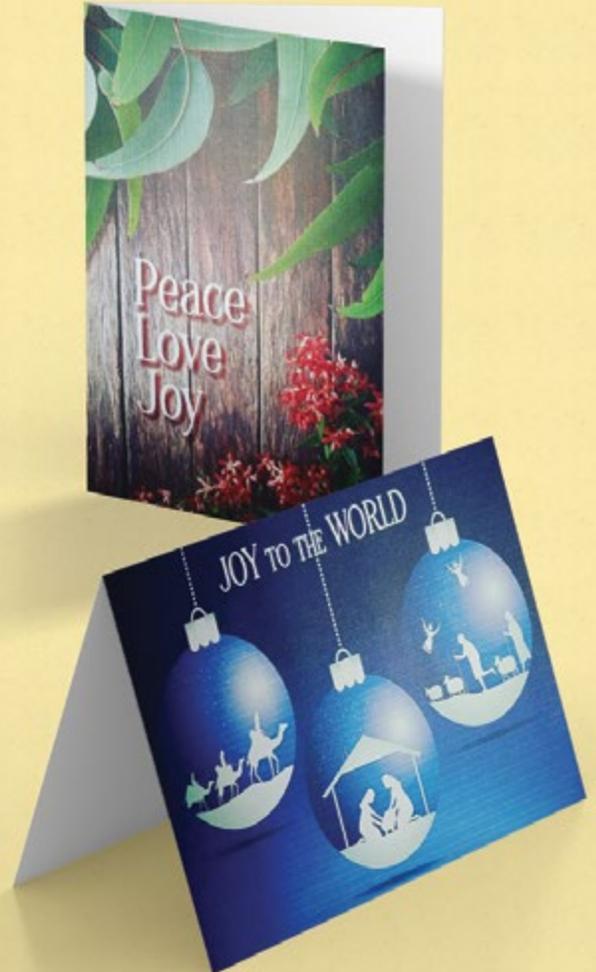
John Cronshaw

1 Luther's Works; Vol 43, page 132

2 A Prayer Book for Australia Shorter Edition, Broughton Books, 1995, page 69

AMUA PUBLICATIONS

Christmas card designs for 2020



Contact your Diocesan Publication Manager to order these and other great book and stationery bargains.



Bookmarks FREE



SIMONE BOSWELL

Technology: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

My husband, James, and I travel around from time to time, speaking with people about technology. We often ask, 'What do you think about technology?' The answers are widely varied!

For some people, living in these times, with the technology we have available to us, technology is good, amazing, wonderful and worth immersing oneself in and exploring.

For others, technology brings more uncertainty. It is bad, frustrating, annoying and scary.

For other people, technology is ugly, cruel, fake, de-humanising, evil.

It can be helpful for us to consider where we stand on this, especially if we are in the middle of parenting children and teenagers, and making daily decisions about how we manage technology in our homes. Do we embrace everything technology has to offer? Do we hand our pre-schoolers iPads to play with to their hearts' content? Do we buy our primary-school children phones so that they can have access to every friend or stranger in the whole world? Do we invest in every gaming device available and give

our teens free range to use all their time absorbed in the world of fantasy and entertainment?

Or do we try to live back in the 1980s? No technology in the home - no phones, no devices, no internet access. Do we restrict our child's every move online? Do we lock down our homes until they flee for freedom once they finish school? Is it the technology that is good or bad or evil? Or is it us, the users of that technology, that determine its moral standing?

Tim Challies reminds us in his book, *The Next Story*¹, that 'Technology is the creative activity of using tools to shape God's creation for practical purposes'. Tim then goes on to expand on thinking about technology in a distinctive Christian way. There are 3 key ideas he discusses:

Technology is a good, God-given gift.

Like everything else in creation, technology is subject to the curse.

It is the human application of technology that helps us determine if it is being used to honour God or further human sin.

God has made us creative, and innovative, and the technology of today is just the most recent manifestation of that. Technology then, is neither good nor evil - it is morally neutral. However, it can become good or evil in the hands of the user. We can use technology in ways that honour God and benefit others, and we can use technology in ways which dishonour God and cause others to sin.

Where is technology good? Andy Crouch in his book, *The Techwise Family*² tells us that technology is in its proper place when it helps us bind with the real people we have been given to love, when it starts great conversations, and helps us take care of the fragile bodies we inhabit.



Photo: Patricia Prudente - Unsplash

Prayer

Technology is in its proper place when it helps us acquire skill and mastery of domains that are the glory of human culture, and when it helps us cultivate awe for the creative world we are a part of and are responsible for stewarding. Technology is in its proper place only when we use it with intention and care.

Am I using technology for good? Many times we want specific clarification. Is this thing good? What rules should I put in place for the children in my family? Should I buy this, or watch that, or play this game, or read this webpage? Are these good things? While it is always easy parenting to just find some rules to follow precisely, that is not wise parenting. It is wise for Christian parents to seek God's good in our decision making, whether it is about technology or any other part of parenting.

Romans tells us, "Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." (Romans 12:1-2).

And in Philippians, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." (Philippians 4:8)

How do we know what 'God's good' is? We ourselves need to be invested in God's Word to find out what is good and holy and then apply that to our decision making about every aspect of our lives, including technology.

Simone Boswell

1 Challies, T., 2011, The Next Story, Zondervan, page 25
2 Crouch, A., 2017, The Tech-Wise Family, Baker Books, pages 20-21

FOLLOWING, FOLLOWING THE SON OF MAN

It doesn't matter if at times
I don't understand
God's perfect reason, purpose or plan
Because my life is still in His hands
On the 'Rock of Salvation'
I can take my stand
following the 'Son of Man'

It doesn't matter if at times
things aren't okay
'Cause I'm headed for a
much brighter day
and Christ is my truth –
my life, my way
YES!!
I'm following the 'Son of Man'

All my days I will be in grateful praise
to the Christ who died –
and was raised
Ever, will I keep on seeking his face
for I'm living under God's
love and grace
and I'M FOLLOWING THE
'SON OF MAN'

Yes,
I'm living with the grace of God
trusting in the Father's love
Hanging with the 'Holy One'
following the 'Son of Man'

© Gwen Wright

A Very Different Easter

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE

The celebration of Easter was very different for most of us in 2020. Some things were especially missed, but there were others which we particularly appreciated. There were also lessons for us to learn as we celebrated the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Some members of the Australian Executive share their reflections on their celebration of Easter 2020.

LESLEY MCLEAN

The space and quiet created by isolation meant more time for reflection during Lent and Holy Week. The daily office, with prayer and Bible, led seamlessly into an experience of the quiet joy of Easter. On Easter Day, I appreciated the presence of the 'whole company of Heaven' along with the 'mystical body of Christ' in prayer, during daily tasks AND a visit from my daughter. We chatted, we drank tea and had a small lunch, and we talked deeply of her father's death at Easter time 22 years ago. The reassurance that to ask, 'where is God in this situation', whatever it may be, helps us to accept what is happening and leave ourselves open to God's presence in whatever form it may take. Any future Easters I leave in God's hands: but I am content in the knowledge that my intimacy with my Lord and my aloneness are merely practice for the journey into the Eternal Presence.



Lesley's display of decorated eggs reminds her of Jesus' resurrection and of the friends who gave the eggs to her.

ELIZABETH APPLEBY



We couldn't stay with friends who live close to our parish, Christ Church St. Laurence, Sydney, from Maundy Thursday to Easter Monday as we usually do. We do value worshipping and having celebratory meals together. I

missed being in church but loved the live stream from our parish. The cantors superbly sang the Passion According to St. John on Good Friday and the celebration of the liturgy and music on Easter Day was stunning. I appreciated even more the Holy Week and Easter story told in words of Scripture, music and liturgical action.

CHRISTINE JENSEN

I knew it was Easter, my calendar said so and yet one day seemed just like the next. I had been reading in the weeks up to Easter some Lenten devotionals which enriched my soul. But I feared that online church could not possibly replace meeting together with my church family. On both Good Friday and Easter Day we 'zoomed' into church. It was so wonderful to see everyone, to wave and reconnect face to face. One of my most precious moments was seeing 99- year- old Frances, who is in a nursing home, but through the chaplain was able to join us for the first time in over a year. Our microphones were muted as we sang the hymns, said the prayers together, read the Bible and listened to the sermon. After the service there was a somewhat chaotic chat time but even that was special. I don't think I'll ever forget this Easter where in the midst of anxiety our hearts were encouraged afresh as we heard again the power of the cross and resurrection of the Lord Jesus in my lounge room.

ANNE KENNEDY

As a priest, I couldn't share the services that are so special at this time with my congregation. I missed celebrating the Resurrection and the wonderful Easter hymns. I appreciated times of stillness, not usually available. In future, I'll look for the joy that seemed to be missing this year.

DENISE LAY

During this time of isolation and feeling alone I thought about the words of Jesus "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me". Did he feel abandoned and gave up hope? No, Jesus lived, bringing new life and the promise of a better tomorrow. Our Priest held closed Church services through Zoom, giving us a connection with one another. No matter where or how I celebrate Easter in the future, God will always be with me. He is Risen - hallelujah, hallelujah!

JAN LIVINGSTONE



For the first time in more than fifty-five years I was unable to spend time with my husband, John, who is in a Nursing Home suffering from Parkinson's Disease and dementia. He is unable to move or communicate and I had been feeding him every

day until the facility went into complete lockdown. I found the separation extremely difficult. I also missed all the congregational meetings we share together over this season, time with my family and the celebratory meal we always have together on Easter Day. However, I did appreciate watching the services telecast from St. Andrew's Cathedral (Sydney). They were brilliant. I felt the preaching was enormously encouraging and resonated with me strongly. The leading, prayers and music were just what I needed to hear. I've learned to be thankful about so many things that previously I've appreciated but now thank God for daily. The Easter message is so much about complete dependence on Jesus and I'm thankful for constant reminders each day of His provision and goodness.

Prayers

CHANGE

Comfort us Lord when we feel
overwhelmed and insecure.
Help us through the challenges we face.
Although we feel safe with familiar ways
Never let us become
resistant to new ways.
Give us grace to be open and receptive,
Entrusting us to work for
your praise and glory.

Carolyn Peulevé, Diocese of Leeds, UK
From "Dear Lord...", 2018, Mothers
Union. Used by permission.

A PRAYER FOR SERENITY

O Father of lights, with whom there
is no variation nor shadow of turning,
who abides steadfast as the stars
of heaven: give us grace to rest
upon thy eternal changelessness,
and in thy faithfulness find peace;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

George W. Briggs, From The SPCK Book of
Christian Prayer, 1995, page 223

A PRAYER FOR MOTHERS UNION

Lord, help us as a family to support
each other and those we serve,
following Jesus who asked us to love
each other as he has loved us. May
we all, through our faith and service,
welcome others into our family.

From Families Worldwide, August 2020

Mind the Gap!

In what now seems like another world, MU Sydney hosted their annual seminar on 'A World of Challenge' in the magnificent St Andrews Cathedral in Sydney on 28th February. As I knew how valuable previous MU seminars were, I invited a number of women from my local church. The topic is particularly pertinent as we all struggle personally with the sudden and unprecedented changes to our lives brought by the threat of the COVID 19 virus. We are grappling with the need to preserve the lives of our families, the vulnerable, and indeed ourselves, while juggling the many demands of parenting, work and church.



The messages we heard that day are relevant in this current pandemic because they are firmly grounded in God's unchanging Word; ancient messages that have stood the test of time over millennia of human catastrophes and suffering.

Jenny Salt shared her wisdom with us on 'Living for God' from 1 Peter 4.

The apostle Peter addressed God's people as strangers in this world, and encouraged them to look to Jesus' example in suffering. 'The end of all things is near' is something we all feel more intensely now. Yet God's word gives us clear instructions to be 'clear minded and self-controlled' in our present sufferings so that we can:

Pray urgently for those who need salvation. What a privilege to be able to speak to the Lord of the universe, Creator, Sustainer and Redeemer, who loves us!

Love deeply because love covers a multitude of sins. We need forgiveness and love, as does everyone else!

Serve one another with an openness of heart in the messiness of life with the gifts that God has given us.

We then heard from Ray and Sandy Galea who serve together in a large multicultural church in western Sydney.

Ray painted a picture of the current cultural beliefs that permeate our society. The ideas that our happiness is paramount, we must be true to ourselves and not tolerate anyone else telling us what to do, are inconsistent with Jesus' command to deny ourselves and take up our crosses daily. Sadly, a consequence of this conflict of ideas is that Christians are no longer viewed as loving and compassionate, but hateful and oppressive. In addition, the last Australian Census indicated a rise in secularism, with one in three people indicating that they have 'no religion'.

However, the gospel of Jesus has always been countercultural and it has endured for over two thousand years because it is true! Ray encouraged



us to remain optimistic because this Gospel of Jesus is as powerful as ever. Jesus has indeed set us free from the fear of death and so we can approach our mission optimistically, knowing that the world's solutions are not working.

Sandy leads the children's ministry at their church. She shared many personal stories as well as much practical wisdom on how to minister effectively to our children. Sandy reminded us from Ecclesiastes 3 that God has set eternity in our hearts and that Jesus delivers with a 'forever story' of hope that our children need. She encouraged us to share the words of eternal life personally with our children and grandchildren, to show them Jesus as we demonstrate prayerful dependence, love and repentance.

As a panel of women responded to questions from the audience about a range of issues affecting our children and youth, it struck me that one of the great strengths of MU is that God has gifted us with one another as we engage with the tasks that God has given us in a challenging world. My group of women all left with a renewed confidence in God's provision for them in their particular roles, as well as many practical resources to assist them in the important task of preparing their children for life and eternity. We have shared the recordings from the MU Sydney website with the rest of our church community. I hope that this little summary will encourage you to do likewise.

Margaret Hodgkinson

Prayers

MORNING PRAYERS

First rays of sunshine
herald the dawning
reflecting the Light on a
crystal-clear creek

Call of a bellbird
awakens the choir
the valley erupts in sweet
songs of praise

Mists of the morning
swirl and rise gently
carry our prayers toward Heaven
In the peace of the morning

my heart overflows
with gifts of the Spirit - Joy,
Hope and Love

© Susan Skowronski 2020

BE WITH ME LORD

Be with me Lord throughout the day,
When sunshine streams or skies are grey.
Be with me Lord in joy or ill;
Choose thou my path, be with me still.
Be with me Lord when all else fails;
Thy precious blood for me avails.
Be with me Lord when life slows down;
Thy steadfast love shall be my crown.

© Margaret Lawrence, from "Dear Lord...",
2018, Mothers Union.
Used by permission.

Switched on Seniors

When you ask God what he wants you to do, whether in retirement, or any other time, don't be surprised if the answer is something you would never have imagined yourself doing.

When I asked this question it seemed the answer was to take over teaching the computer to seniors as part of the church craft group. Though nervous about doing this, I remembered how scared I had been in my working life when I had to learn to use a computer, and how it took me three goes at each course I attended before I had enough confidence to try things for myself. I felt I could really empathise with seniors trying to learn for the first time, and so I led the computer skills group for four years. This included upgrading the computers, writing courses that were simple enough for complete beginners, and supporting people trying to untangle their computerised affairs after their computer-literate partner had died.

When a 92-year-old man joined the group, I remembered something one of the other computer learners had said many times - "the iPad is so much easier". Maybe that was what was needed for this gentleman? I entered a local competition to win an iPad and in God's purposes that is what happened! However, I discovered that I didn't know how to use it - and my children were interstate and overseas so I wasn't able to get help from them. A friend in the Bible Study I was attending also had a new iPad so we tried to help each other. I asked her if she would start an iPad group with me and we both hoped that someone would come with more



Switched on Seniors group at work.

knowledge than us so we could learn from them. But that is not what happened! God had other ideas. He certainly chose the weak to do this job.

Twelve people came to the first group, and 18 to the second. Though the flyer said "BYO iPad", only half of those who came each time had an iPad, so the first task was to apply for a grant to buy iPads for the group. The grant application was successful and so the iPad Group was born.

'Switched on Seniors' is now into its 8th year with a weekly attendance of about 40 people. It has become part of a national organisation tasked with helping Seniors gain the skills and confidence to navigate the ever-changing landscape of the "online" world.

While I was writing this article I received the following message.

Hi Gran and Grandpa! 😊 I just wanted to let you know some exciting news! Tomorrow I am being baptised at 11am (Canada time). I'm really excited!! 😊 The whole service will be live-streamed so if you would like to watch it live here is the link: <https://live.kcf.org/#> It should be on at around 11:15am (canada time) 😊 otherwise Mum or Dad will video it for you! ❤️ lots of love, Tia

I am so glad that I know what 'live-streamed' means and how to access it.

Perhaps you also share some of the questions and issues raised by members of the group, such as

- I love my computer, why would I bother with an iPad?
- My eyesight is not very good so I don't think it would work for me.
- I have never learned to use the computer - I think I am too old to start now.
- They use a different language and I don't understand any of it.
- All I can see is problems created by technology - it has taken over the lives of young people.
- There seem to be so many online scams, how do you stay safe?

Watch this space as I try to answer some of these, and others, so that more 'Seniors' can become 'Switched On' in our fast-changing world.

Sheena Edwards

The Away From It All Scheme In Australia

With droughts, bushfires, and floods at unprecedented levels in Australia this past summer I think this is a great time to talk about The Away From It All Scheme which began in England many years ago to give families a holiday break which they could not otherwise afford.

MU started this scheme in the Diocese of The Murray in response to the Ash Wednesday bushfires of 1983. As well as losing loved ones, some people lost their homes and, in rural areas, they also had many losses of sheds, fences, livestock and income, as has happened recently in parts of Australia.

As former dairy farmers, my husband and I were very aware of the stress of working seven days a week, and consequently, the need to make time for a break, no matter how hard that was to do. I could see that in time people trying to get back on their feet would be in this position and would need to get away for a break. Alternatively, some people would need to travel to obtain the comfort of family and therefore may need money for this.

In the days following the bushfires I heard that the diocese had some money available, so I approached our bishop at the time, Bishop Porter, to suggest that if we had some money given to us we could start up this Away From It All Scheme to enable people affected by the fires to take a break.

The scheme itself was very broad. We could provide money for fares or petrol if someone had somewhere to go. We asked people in



Bishop Porter with the Away from It All caravan.

the church if they would be willing to provide accommodation at their holiday houses or lend a caravan. We were even able to provide money to hire someone to caretake a property so that a family could go away. In each case a referral was necessary from their rector or other responsible person.

At the end of twelve months it was suggested that the account should be closed, but it was pointed out that for some people the need was only then becoming apparent. Nine years of Lifeline counselling had made me very aware of how long the effects of these disasters last before some people are able to get back to normal and stress levels are under control. In fact, the Red Cross referred seven families to us three years after the fires. By purchasing a caravan, we were able to keep the scheme going for some years. Although it is often not recognised that this is a valuable tool to use in times of stress, we found it to be much appreciated.

Jan Malpas

Australian President 1987-1992

Around the Branches

TIME OUT IN YEPPON (ROCKHAMPTON)

On February 7th members from Keppel MU met in nearby Yeppoon for a time of reflection and sharing. The morning commenced with a quiet time presented by Mary Peacock, our 96- year-old Honorary Life Member. Mary spoke to us about turning our lives around. She said that while some conversions are dramatic, for some of us it is like falling in love as we enjoy spending time with Jesus, getting to know Him and finally realising that we want to make a commitment.

Mary talked about the greatest conversion known (Saul/Paul) with great enthusiasm and expression as she guided us along the road to Damascus with Saul. Mary's talk resulted in much discussion and sharing. Perhaps our "quiet morning" was really a "reflective morning",



Members from Keppell branch with their speaker, Mary Peacock, front right.

with much food for thought. The morning was concluded with prayers from members about concerns raised during our sharing time.

Jan Robinson

Keppel MU

SOUTHERN VALES (THE MURRAY) REMEMBERS DOREEN RICHARDS

Doreen joined Mothers' Union in July 1958 at St Andrew's, Orpington, Kent, UK, when her daughter, Christine, was quite small. After moving to Australia Doreen enjoyed the fellowship of Mothers Union at Holy Trinity, North Terrace, Adelaide, St Francis of Assisi, Christies Beach, and Southern Vales.

Members were enthralled when Doreen told groups about her life during the war when she and other school age children were evacuated. She had many 'billet' homes during this time.

Doreen was presented with her 60 years of Service to Mothers' Union certificate in July 2018 by the Diocesan President, Eileen Smith, during the Sunday Service at St Nicholas, Seaford.



Doreen Richards

Doreen will be sadly missed by her friends and fellow-MU members since her death on 28th September, 2019.

Helen Cook

CARLINGFORD CELEBRATIONS (SYDNEY)

On 7 February a 50- year badge and certificate were presented to Suzette Binskin at St Paul's Carlingford and North Rocks by the Bishop of Western Sydney, the Right Reverend Gary Khoo, and the Area President of the Western Region, Suzanne Reimer, who is also a member of AMUA at St. Paul's. Suzette joined the 'Young Wives Group' of MU in 1966 whilst living in Tamworth before joining the group at St Paul's Carlingford and North Rocks, where she has been President for the past twelve years.

Bishop Khoo, who had been senior minister at the church for the previous seven years and on the ministerial staff for a total of fifteen years, was also welcomed at a special lunch following a celebratory communion service to begin the year 2020. At the beginning of his time as Senior Minister he had conducted a similar service for the MU group in



Suzette Binskin receives her 60 year certificate from Bishop Khoo.

2012, and, in 2020, as the newly appointed Bishop of Western Sydney, he administered communion to some of the same members.

Doreen Smith

St Paul's Carlingford and North Rocks MU



Carlingford members enjoyed lunch with Bishop Khoo.

Not Just Tea and Biscuits in the Diocese of Adelaide

Late in 1894 a small gathering of women met together in a North Adelaide drawing room to consider what steps would be necessary to inaugurate the Mothers Union in South Australia and the first official meeting took place in Bishop's Court on Thursday, 28th of August 1895. We are still going, with 17 branches and 250 members! But we are now the new MU! It was with great enthusiasm that we listened to our Archbishop's 'Vision 2022' for the diocese to 'reach out', and we took up the challenge. Therefore, the past two years have been a time of hope and great change for us as we look at our mission and outreach and the best use of our talents and money.

The rent of premises in Leigh Street in the city was considerable so we are now holding our Council Meetings and our Diocesan Member meetings in the say.kitchen in the city. This is a training house run by St John's Youth Services, helping young people to learn about hospitality in all its forms. We support them by renting the rooms and buying lunch and coffee!

The Quickest Warmth Project is an amazing group of people who make and supply personal and household goods for distribution via Anglicare, the Department of Child Protection, and Aboriginal Health. They also have a Pop-Up



shop, Toy Boxes, a Pamper Packing Party filling boxes for people who are having a difficult time and many other events. MU members supply and support from many branches and individually.

For many years, members have spent a morning or an afternoon baby-sitting at Helen Mayo House whilst mothers have treatment or "time out" at this facility, which provides counselling and mental-health care for parents of infants and young children. At present they are minding the children during an art class.

Some members are part of Australian Church Women, and support the packing day when Bags of Love (20 last year) are packed and sent to a women's safety house which supports women experiencing domestic violence. Feminine hygiene products and toiletries are also collected individually and from our branches for the Seeds of Affinity project, which helps women entering prison, as they have nothing on entry, and when leaving, so they have something to help start their post- sentence time.

We continue to support the Ordinands who are studying at St Barnabas College, both financially and by being an 'ear' for them. Over the past two years we have also supported Anglicare's Foster Care Programme, the Turning Point Programme which helps people experiencing homelessness and St John's Youth Services, which supplies accommodation for young mothers and their dependent children. The new MU!

Marion McCall
Diocesan President

Spotlight on the Diocese of Willochra

Mothers Union is holding on in our Diocese, with a dedicated group who are committed to touch as many lives as possible in their Christian commitment to build hope and confidence as they support individuals and families. Often it is their own families who are being encouraged through difficult times such as family breakdowns and changes of employment. Many Mothers Union members are the backbone of small regional and country churches, keeping up with worship preparations for their congregations. We have seven branches and an increasing number of Diocesan Members dotted across our big area helping out and keeping in touch with the communities where they live.

With many older members amongst us, the importance of carrying people and circumstances in prayer, whether they be local or world-wide concerns, or our MU overseas links, as well as just keeping in touch with those living on their own, must never be undervalued. Since many of our older generation have skills and knowledge about living more simply than our younger generations no longer have, sharing this will be very worthwhile as we face our society's future.

SO, WHAT DO WE DO?

Some branches highlight their attending of Nursing Homes and Aged Care facilities to conduct regular visits and services for residents and their families.



Community Café Willochra.



Willochra Quickest Warmth contributions.

One branch helps with the running of a community cafe and community garden, facilitated by their church — this reaches out to the more marginalised as they build relationships and nurture positive participation with life. One branch has visited a school garden and a permaculture group in their area to learn more for their own sustainable living as well as to help them set up a 'grow free' cart at their church Op Shop. Another branch conducts breakfast times at their local school, catering for students from early bus trips and other early arrivals, giving an example of care and interest as well as nourishing well-being across generations.

All this activity is kept together collectively within our Diocese as we have several Diocesan worship services annually and also support bi-annual projects. One recent project was to make and buy items to assist the 'Quickest Warmth Project', which links those who have quilting, crocheting, knitting, embroidering, sewing and toy making skills with Anglicare, the Department for Child Protection and other welfare services for children and families in South Australia. Mothers Union across the state is a key contributor to this venture, which was started by two of our former Willochran members when they moved to Elizabeth/Gawler some years ago, and has continued to expand in its generosity and influence.

Our Executive keeps members informed and giving through the AMUA departments - Overseas and Northern Outreach, Prayer and Spirituality, Publication, Social Issues and Action, distribution of Mia Mia - and this continues to promote our confidence and hope as the core of Mother's Union— to bring about a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful and flourishing relationships... hold on!!

Jane Tanner

MU in the Diocese of Bunbury

In writing to members earlier in the year, Wendy Mabey, the Diocesan President, finished with these words, 'One of the great joys of our organisation is that it is not a case of 'one size fits all'. Our branches do not need to be mirror images of each other. We are able, while never losing sight of the aims and objectives of Mothers Union, to fashion our branch life and our activities to the needs of our members and the communities in which we exist.'¹ Despite being spread over the many kilometres which make up the Diocese of Bunbury, in the south-west corner of Western Australia, branches seek to encourage one another and serve their communities in many different ways.

Diocesan (Lone) Members are invited to branch functions, to Lady Day and the Country Rally, an annual event organised by a branch other than Bunbury. We don't forget our older members who now reside in aged care accommodation. Many branches send them a birthday card and others make regular visits to keep in touch. Several branches have what is termed a 'secret prayer partner'. Once a year each member is allocated a fellow member and is asked to pray for them for 12 months. Then a year later all is revealed.

At the time of Midday Prayers, Bunbury Branch has a PowerPoint presentation of the dioceses for which we are praying on our meeting day. The



Farmland near Walpole

slides show where these dioceses are located, the main features of the various countries and, wherever possible, some information about MU.

Many of our branches distribute Joy Boxes and Joy Bags which contain seven small gifts, all individually wrapped, with a Bible verse attached. The recipient is invited to open one gift per day and, hopefully, each gift will bring some joy into their lives. They may have been ill, they may be lonely, especially at times like Christmas, they may have lost a loved one, they may be celebrating a special occasion. Feedback suggests the boxes have been so very well received.

Knitting is done by many branches, providing beanies and rugs to the Mission to Seafarers in Bunbury and Albany. With the seafarers being away from their homes for many months at a time, we try to let them know that their work is appreciated. Some branches knit knee rugs for residents in aged care. Rugs are also sent to the South-West Women's Refuge in Bunbury where women and children often arrive with very few, if any, possessions as they seek a safe place in which to shelter.

One branch supports local families in need through involvement with Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree programme, giving a Christmas present to children on behalf of grandparents and parents who are in prison and by sending Care angels, with a message of hope, to people who



Rugs knitted for Seafarers and Nursing Home residents

have visited the op-shop, and to people in nursing homes. Another branch provides toilet bags for the needy at their local regional emergency accommodation centre.

Other activities carried out by branches include members bringing items for a Christmas hamper to be given to a family in need, the knitting of small jumpers for our overseas link diocese of Kapsabet in Kenya and the holding of soup and sandwich luncheons, film evenings and other fund-raising activities in support of MU projects.

Members also encourage families to become involved in their parish by supporting them when they come for Baptism by presenting gifts such as a 'Baptism Bag', a figurine of an angel or something else appropriate, a Bible, or a Mothers' Union baptism card and a copy of one of the Gospels. Cards are often sent to all on the first anniversary of their baptism. Each year the Bunbury branch invites the junior choir from Bunbury Primary School to perform a morning of entertainment. Also invited are their parents and the branch provides morning tea for both the children and their parents. A wonderful outreach as very few of the children or their parents have ever been inside a church.



Christmas Care Angels help share the joy of Christmas

Margaret Rennick

Mia Mia Correspondent

1 The Mustard Tree, Autumn 2020

A New Normal In Perth?

Some months ago, I was asked to write an article about MU in Perth. I immediately said yes and then began to worry and stress about what I would write. I realised that most of what happens in my diocese happens in a similar way elsewhere. I wanted something different or unique.

And then our world was turned on its ear by the coronavirus. So much of what we thought of as normal and everyday has changed. Overnight, I did not have a job. We suddenly had to plan and strategise to do the everyday. Toilet paper became a topic of conversation everywhere!

Suddenly I was also in the position of having to make decisions about cancelling various Mothers' Union events that were planned to take place over the coming weeks and months. Suddenly some of the things that we held dear, that we considered were Mothers' Union, such as Lady Day, came under threat. And it did not stop there – executive meetings, festivals, a bus trip to a country event, a conference planned for later in the year – all of these were under threat and eventually all had to be cancelled or postponed until an unknown date.

Now I am the president of an organisation that cannot do what we think are the important things, the things we look forward to each year and are a special part of our calendar.

And so, having no work and having cancelled everything in my diary I had time to sit in the orchard and remove unwanted grass! God speaks to us any place and any time, and in that place I was reminded that in fact we are still Mothers' Union. We are still able to follow our founder's dream. We can and will always have the goal 'To reach the homes of the nation for Christ.' Nothing has changed but everything has changed. Now we have time to reflect on what we have always done and to work out what we will be able to do under the present situation as well as what we should and will be able to do moving forward. Sometimes all has to be removed, stripped away, washed or cleaned, so that we can really work out what is important.

Whether we like it or not we are now in this position. So back to basics we go to look at our founder's dream. Mary Sumner wanted to



View of Perth from Lesmurdie.



Swan River from Mosman Park.

reach the homes of the nations for Christ. How can we continue to do that? We cannot meet together. We cannot hold events where Christ is proclaimed. We cannot even be in the same room.

An interesting thing has begun to happen. Church services are being live-streamed, ministers are doing letter-box drops to parishioners, families have rediscovered the joy of doing activities together, things are being done differently in many spheres. I am also hearing about our branches, keeping in touch in new ways. Some branches have a 'prayer chain' type of phone link-up where members call others. Some have divided the membership list into groups and a 'leader' is responsible to call each member of that small group. Some branch presidents are sending out regular, short newsletters to their members. I am waiting to hear about the first on-line meeting using Zoom or a similar platform—I am sure it will come.

Along with keeping in touch with members we are also checking up on other parishioners and non-church people. Serving our neighbours has become more common. Our members are looking

for ways in which they can in fact be Mothers' Union members. We are looking for ways to minister to those around us and stay within the current restrictions. When we are placed under adversity we sometimes do our best work and I believe that we could choose to use this situation to seriously look at ourselves and our organisation. What will we choose to continue when we come out of this situation and what will we choose to stop? I hope that my branches will choose to look at what they have been doing. To retain the work of Mothers' Union but to discard some of the unnecessary formality. We can do our work without formal monthly branch meetings! We can in fact be and do Mothers' Union work outside of the church building. How exciting to see what will unfold as the world goes back to normal. I pray that the new normal will look different in some ways to the old normal. May God use us as a mighty movement of women in ways that we have never imagined.

Kaye Healy

Diocesan President



MU - Alive and Well in the Diocese of the Murray

In the Diocese of The Murray we have a great diversity of life-styles, ranging from the outer metropolitan area of Adelaide, to seaside towns on the Fleurieu Peninsula; large towns in the Lower South East and Upper Murray and with farming communities in between. The MULOA process revealed that, like many other Dioceses around the world, we have members who are ageing and distances between branches are not so easy to handle as age progresses. BUT, by working together and in conjunction with other organisations, we achieve so many positive outcomes that between us all we can proudly give AMUA a more progressive profile. Our seven Diocesan (Lone) members and the other members (approximately 100) support our work with their prayers, either at meetings or through various prayer chains. We decided two years ago to hold our AGM/Council meeting after the Mary Sumner Day service to reduce the travel time for members across the Diocese, which seems to work very well, with good attendance. We also hold this service and Lady Day at a different venue each year to share the driving miles.

The Families Equip program has been a huge success for twelve years and in the past few years has grown immensely. We now have twelve trained facilitators, who facilitate discussion in the



Naracoorte Facilitator Training



Morphett Vale 'Families Equip' participants

groups, as well as other dedicated supporters. We recently conducted a training weekend in Naracoorte for five new facilitators who are now able to conduct parenting courses in the South-East of S A. A five-week course was held at Morphett Vale, with people participating ranging in age from young mums to grandmothers. We have had an all-male group and have several trained male facilitators, so the course is not "mums only". We feel that this program is one of the most outstanding things we do. It covers the Aims and Objects of Mothers Union and certainly takes the 2020 theme of 'Building Hope and Confidence' to great levels. Participants are encouraged, affirmed and supported in a non-judgemental way, not only by facilitators but by each other too.

Knitting continues to produce wonderful items, mainly beanies for the Mission to Seafarers, rugs for the needy and this year we have commenced making "Care Angels". One group hung angels on the rectory fence for the community to take; others have been handed out in hospitals. Who knows where they will go in future? Mary, Joseph and the donkey have also been knitted by many branches. These items travel from home to home throughout the district each day during Advent and end their journey at the Christmas services. This gives people a reason to visit someone they may not have otherwise visited, spreading a little

News from the North West

The Diocese of North West Australia is one of the biggest land-based dioceses in the world, covering about two million square kilometres from Dongara in the south, to the top of Western Australia, and east to the South Australian and the Northern Territory borders. We have 16 parishes, consisting of farming, fishing, and mining communities with populations from 700 to over 37,000, three Mission to Seafarers' ministries and rural and prison chaplaincies. As you can imagine, this provides us with many challenges, including a sparse population and long distances which makes travel difficult if we want to get together.

We try to fulfill the Aims and Objects of Mothers' Union by meeting together in our two branches (Carnarvon and Geraldton) for fellowship and prayer and by engaging in service to the community, including the provision of Anti-Stress Kits for seafarers visiting Geraldton and gift bags for women leaving the refuge house.

Recently, Jessie Larman, one of our members in Carnarvon, hung up her boots after more than 30 years of visiting new mums and their babies in the local hospital. As Jessie says, 'With the mothers' permission it has been lovely to ask the Lord God to bless their babies. [and]to be able also to give a gift of homemade booties and a card at that time with a message on how to become a Christian. ...I thank our Heavenly Father God for the privilege that the Carnarvon Hospital has allowed me to have by ministering the love of God in this way through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.' Like MU members everywhere, our activities have been severely curtailed because of the coronavirus pandemic. We look forward to being able to meet again and to continue to support the work of Mothers Union worldwide in prayer and action.

Gladys Sutton

Diocesan President



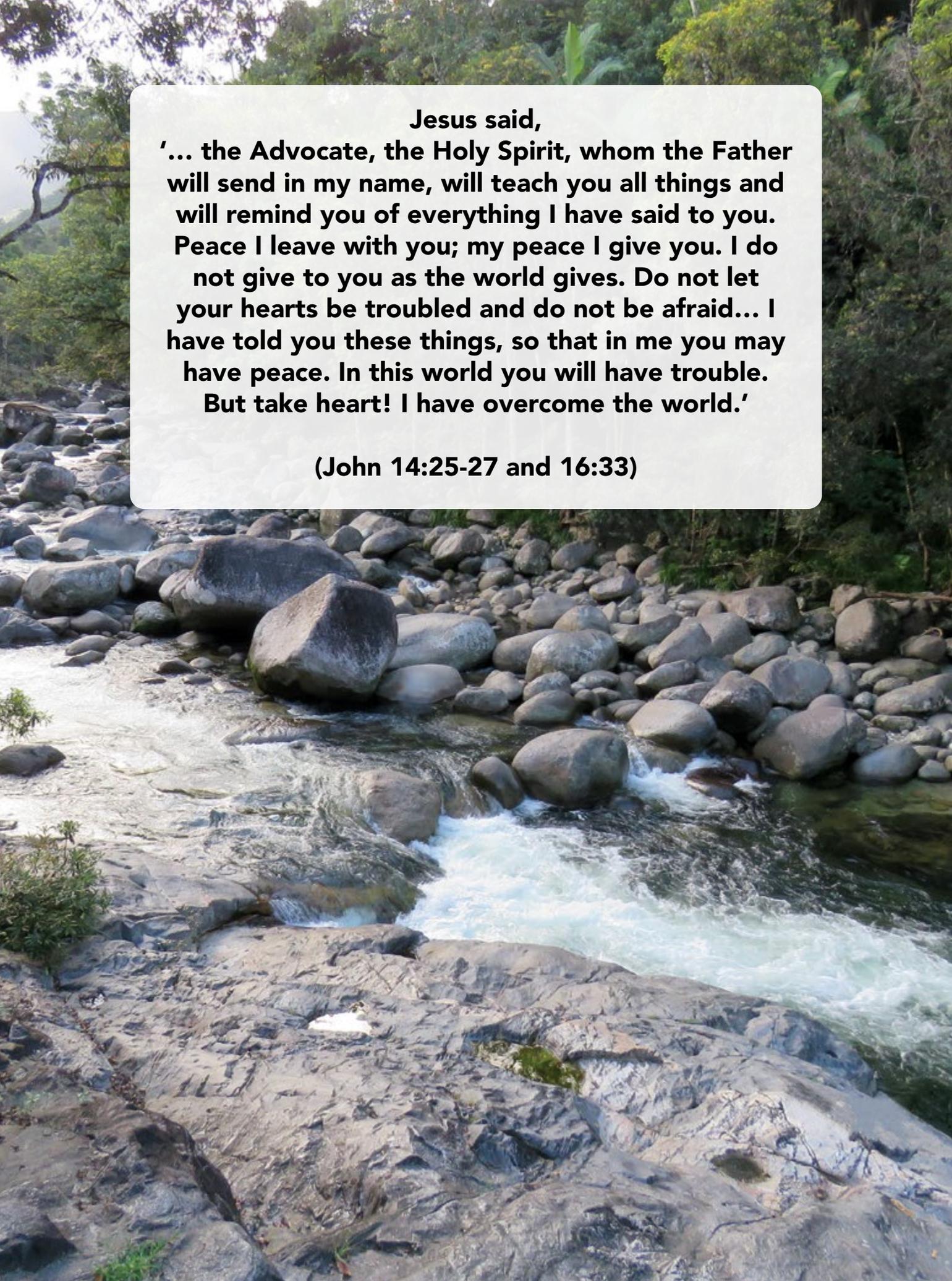
Mary, Joseph and the donkey travel around parishes during Advent

cheer and love. The knitted figures have also travelled to other places while in the care of each 'host' family - the playground, shopping trolley, hospital visiting trolley, picnics — all places where their appearance creates conversation regarding the Christmas story.

Baptism involvement, with personal visits to encourage families and leaflets for parents and godparents and cards or small gifts for the child, has been carried out for many years. Various cards—whether hand-made by members or those available from AMUA or Mary Sumner House— have been used to remember the baptism anniversary of children baptised in our churches. Although not very expensive, they assist in our outreach and are worth their weight in gold.

We also enjoy working with other organisations, which allows us to help family life in other ways, but these stories will have to wait for another time.

Jocelyn Williamson



**Jesus said,
'... the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father
will send in my name, will teach you all things and
will remind you of everything I have said to you.
Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do
not give to you as the world gives. Do not let
your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid... I
have told you these things, so that in me you may
have peace. In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world.'**

(John 14:25-27 and 16:33)