



Shepparton
Uniting Church

Sixth Edition
Autumn 2016

on the *Vine*

Seeking to be faithful to Christ in worship, community life and serving the wider community.

EASTER

Beyond the Shadow of the Cross

Prayer Points

Let Go and Let God

Synod Snippets

Stand for Sanctuary

Cafe Praxis North East

Changing the world one cup at a time

An Ecumenical Triumph?

A COMMON DATE FOR EASTER

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Rev.
Loni Vaitohi
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Rev.
Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt
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“

We are here as part of God's church, not because we are good enough, or because we are better than others, but because we recognise the need for God in our lives and seek to learn together what it is to walk the way of Christ in love and service of others.

We come from a variety of backgrounds and are at different points in our faith journey. This all adds to the richness of our lives together. Whether you are here as a visitor or looking for a place to be your spiritual home, I trust that you will find a welcome and something that nourishes your inner being.

”

Shepparton Uniting Church
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Sharing God's love

Welcome to the Autumn edition of 'On the Vine'.

We would like to take this opportunity to say a big thank you to Corey Jinnette for assisting us with the last five issues of 'On the Vine'. He has done a wonderful job creating the layout and presentation of 'On the Vine'. Unfortunately he is no longer able to lend us his services and Melissa and I will be attempting to fill the big shoes he has left. Thank you Corey for all your work.

This edition we look into our wider community today, as well as delving into the past, to find out what mission is all about. The current outreach of 'sanctuary' has been taken on by congregations and presbyteries both within our Synod and

beyond, sharing God's love with some of those who need it most. We also have a look back at the work of Frontier Services, in particular the work parties, to see what has become of the legacies of the Rev's John Flynn and Fred MacKay and the missional work they began many years ago.

This seems a timely theme to be reflecting on as we enter the Easter season and hurtle rapidly towards Pentecost. We read in Acts chapter 2 of how the Holy Spirit came to the disciples in the form of rushing wind and flame, enabling them to speak to people of all nations and tongues of the greatness of the Lord. This was mission at its best. The disciples speaking in ways which others could understand them equally, and as the story continues in Acts, they broke

bread together, gave away belongings to anyone in need, and worshipped the Lord for days to come.

The missional work happening across the country in many different formats under many different names is an extension of that original Pentecost. People meeting people in their time of need, helping in whatever way they can and sharing the good news of the Lord, in ways that are accessible to all.

So as you read through this edition, may you feel moved by the Holy Spirit towards mission and may you be enabled to share with those around you in whatever way is required by talking, listening or doing.

Peace, Jen Shields.

Easter 2016

The following are the special worship and event times for Shepparton Uniting Church, Easter 2016:

Palm Sunday, 20th March 9:30am

Holy Week

Monday 21st March, 7:00pm

Tuesday 22nd March, 7:00pm

Wednesday 23rd March, 7:00pm

Maundy Thursday, 24th March 7:00pm

Good Friday - 25th March 9:30am at Shepparton Uniting Church.

Easter Sunday - 27th March 7:00am on West Side of Victoria

Park Lake, Shepparton, Victoria. BYO chair and mug. 9:30am at Shepparton Uniting Church.

All services will be held at Shepparton Uniting Church, 150 Maude St, Shepparton unless otherwise stated:

Special Service times for Shepparton Rural Parish are as follows:

Palm Sunday 20th March: 9:00am - Dookie Uniting Church 11:00am Katandra West Uniting Church. 6:30pm Mt Major, Dookie. Gates

open at 4:30pm. BYO Chair or rug.

Maundy Thursday - 24th March, 7:30pm at Pine Lodge Uniting Church.

Easter Sunday - 27th March 9:00am at Dookie Uniting Church. 2:00pm at Kialla Gardens Community Centre.



From the Minister's Desk

Raised to New Life

God raised Jesus from death to new life. This is the central belief that lies at the heart of Christianity.

What exactly happened on that first Easter morning is something we continue to puzzle about. The various accounts of the resurrection of Jesus and his subsequent appearances to the disciples raise as many questions as they answer. Nevertheless the stories of the empty tomb tell us something crucial about the resurrection. Jesus did not simply "live on in people's memories." The resurrection



was more profound than that. The resurrected Jesus may pass through locked doors, but he is no insubstantial ghost. Neither is he simply resuscitated. Unlike Lazarus who is brought back from the dead only to grow old and die again, Jesus is raised to a new life where death is no more. In this new life Jesus is not always recognized by his disciples. He has changed and it takes time for them to know him. Resurrected life is different from this life, and yet the two are connected. Paul compared the body before resurrection to a seed planted in the earth.

At the heart of all these stories and images is the conviction that God did something radically and wonderfully new after Jesus was crucified. God's response to the evil and suffering of the cross is not to come charging in to the rescue, but to bring new life even out of death. God did not prevent Good Friday, but God transformed it into Easter. We who live in a world full of Good Fridays can find enormous hope in this. We know the pain and suffering that so many live in. Sometimes it can

seem unrelenting. In the midst of this we put our hope and trust in a God who can transform even death itself. It is this experience of God at work raising Christ, and transforming Good Fridays into Easters, that has empowered the church from its earliest times. In the midst of all our questions and doubts about what happened and how it happened, we can be assured that God, who created us and loves us, continues to raise us up from death to life. We cannot simply hold on to what was. We do not always know what form the future will take. What we do know is that nothing, not even death itself, has the power to put us beyond the reach of God's love.

May you be filled with joy and hope as you reflect on the events surrounding Jesus' death and resurrection and take the opportunity to share in the various services that are taking place throughout Holy Week.

By Rev. Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt

Prayer Points

Let Go and Let God

So often in our Prayers we try to suggest a solution instead of leaving it in the Hands of God.

From personal experience I have been guilty of this until I finally hand it over to our loving Heavenly Father. The amazing thing is that when I do this my problem or request has been

solved in an unexpected way and with a far better outcome than I could ever have imagined.

By Betty Hildebrand

Mysteries in Life

There are many mysteries in life ... many things we don't understand.

God doesn't always tell us how He's working out his plan.

But in His time and in His way He clearly lets us know

He's working out His best for us because He loves us so.

- Roy Lessin

Reflecting On...

The Human Side of Jesus

At our first Café Praxis North East gathering we were asked to share our favourite Bible passage with each other. There was for many a look of "I have no idea" to a look of "Oh my gosh what on earth am I going to say or should I just pass?" I know for me the latter was how I was feeling. But after a few moments of reflection and hearing others tell their story I found that I indeed do have a favourite passage.

As a child I grew up loving the Christmas story. Add a baby, some angels, some shepherds and wooly sheep, some barn animals and let's not forget those wondrous looking wise men, pair that with the excitement of Christmas Eve festivities, Christmas lights, getting together with family and friends and it was certainly a magical time.

As I got older the curtain behind some of that magic was revealed. A young family fleeing for their lives was certainly one curtain. I started attending events, gatherings and conventions on my own and began to wonder "is this my faith or just a product of the family and church I grew up in?" For a long time this thought of not having my own sense of faith concerned me. How can I be a true Christian when I don't know it all or even have it all together?

For me now I would have to say one of the stories that inspires me

most is Matthew chapter 26 verse 36-46; When Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane, the disciples are asleep and he is taking the time to speak with God. For a long time this passage was just the "same old" passage we hear every Easter. That was until the most unlikely moment that it suddenly struck a chord with me.

I was participating as a backstage crew member in the STAG production of Jesus Christ Superstar. I was stuck on stage with two other members of the stage crew behind the sets listening to the garden scene take place. One night we were going through the motions, as we had so many times before, but this night we could hear the rain outside hitting the tin roof and suddenly the words being sung hit me. "Take this cup away from me for I don't want to taste it's poison. Feel it burn me, I have changed I'm not as sure as when we started. Then I was inspired now I'm sad and tired". It was in that moment that I suddenly realised that even Jesus faltered. Even he wished that his path could go in a different direction. It was in that moment that I realised that it is okay to have doubts about our own faith but what is important is that we move forward, trusting in the love of God. Just as Jesus did on that fateful day.



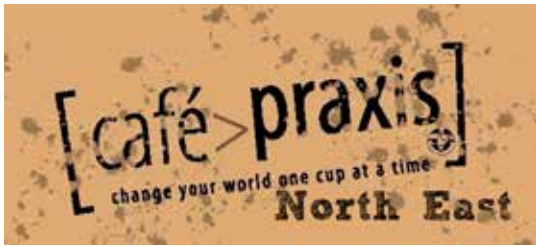
Okay so God doesn't want us all to die on a cross just as his son did, but in every sacrifice we make for our faith, and for God, there is a wondrous miracle of resurrection just around the corner.

That is why the Easter story and in particular the garden story in the book of Matthew is one of my favourite passages of the Bible. It is the moment when we see the truly human side of Jesus. We see ourselves in Jesus.

I'm sure you have your own favourite passage and I would encourage you to share these stories with each other just as we did at Café Praxis North East as it helped to create insight into how each other's faith journeys are created, motivated and renewed.
By Melissa Graham

Group Profile

Cafe Praxis North East



During 2015 the young adults group had a bit of a flat year due to the many activities that individuals in the group take on. For others, family commitments took them away from the opportunity to engage together as a faith group.

A number of the young adults felt that meeting in six week blocks, due to the above commitments, was nearly impossible. However they still felt passionate about meeting together as a community of faith, sharing each other's passion for Christ and discipleship.

These young adults had heard of a group called "Café Praxis" based in Melbourne and run by

the Synod's Discipleship Educator - Young Adult, Adrian 'Age' Greenwood. Café Praxis is a project connecting and hosted by young adults (and others) from a few UCA churches. The idea is to gather and chat about topics, issues and ideas that help us look outward. Our local young adults felt that this was something that they wanted to be involved in but a Wednesday evening in which it is held made it impossible to attend.

After initial contact with Rosalie and further contact with "Age" Greenwood it was decided to create a regional concept for these events and Café Praxis North East was born.

Meeting on the 3rd Friday each month over a meal, it is hoped that this will allow other young adults from across the region, often a minority in their home

congregations, the opportunity to attend. Giving them a space to join with like-minded individuals to connect, explore and engage with discipleship, theology and fellowship.

Café Praxis has now had two gatherings. The first was a catch up and look at what is hoped for in 2016. Our second gathering saw Rohan Pryor come up from Melbourne and talk with us on the theme "What does God want me to do with my life and how will I know?"

Our March and April gatherings will see us engage with the Palm Sunday theme and have "Age" Greenwood himself attend to talk with the group.

For more information about Café Praxis North East contact Melissa Graham: melgraham9@bigpond.com, Jen Shields: jendavies1@hotmail.com or Rev. Rosalie Rayment-Hewitt: rosalie_john@bigpond.com

Rural Round Up

Palm Sunday Sunset Service

The Palm Sunday Sunset Service on Mount Major at Dookie was started in the late 80s in response to ecumenical bible studies that had been held in Dookie earlier. The service is timed to finish as the sun sets.

Over the years we have had palm fronds, a horse that played the part of a donkey, and yes we have also been lucky to have a real donkey.

This year's Ecumenical Palm

Sunday service is being held on March the 20th starting at 6.30pm.

Gates are open at 4.30pm for those wishing to have afternoon tea first. Bring your own everything chair, rug, coat, food, thermos, torch and repellent. Have a picnic and stay to see the stars.

Directions from Shepparton via Midland highway to Dookie College turn off, follow the signs.



In case of wet weather meet at the St. Andrews Uniting church in Dookie

For more details contact: Judy (03) 56286390 and Margaret (03) 58232265 or 0429232265.

Majorie Shields.

An Ecumenical Triumph?

A Common Date For Easter

What's the date for Easter in 2018? Look at your diary, which may well publish Easter dates for several years ahead. Since 326 AD, Easter can be any date between March 22 and April 25. If you don't have a helpful diary, you can work the date out for yourself:

Easter Sunday is the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Spring Equinox in the Northern Hemisphere. This is why Easter dates can vary over a month. So this year, Easter is March 27. In 2018, it will be April 1.

That's Easter dating settled for the Western churches! But the Eastern or Orthodox churches use a different calendar, the older Julian calendar (the West uses the Gregorian calendar). So this year we celebrate Easter March 27 and the Orthodox on May 1. In 2018, our Easter is April 1; Orthodox

Easter will be April 8. Some years both Easters fall on the same date, which last happened in 2014, and will occur in 2017 (April 16).

Are you thoroughly confused? And ready to wait for your diary or calendar to answer your Easter date questions?

Or can something be done about all this uncertainty and confusion?

In the long years since the tenth century, church leaders have tried to do something to 'fix' the date of Easter. Last century, in 1928, the UK passed a law setting the date as the first Sunday after the second Saturday in April. Several Australian states passed matching legislation. But the move fizzled out and the laws were not enacted.

In 2014, Pope Francis indicated an interest in setting a common date for Easter. But it was the

Coptic (Egyptian) Pope Tawadros II who approached the Papal Nuncio in Egypt last May to discuss a common date. Later the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Justin Welby, met Pope Tawadros to discuss the question. Pope Tawadros raised the matter with the Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartholomew I, head of the Greek Orthodox Church.

So agreement is now very close - between the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Communion and both major sections of the Orthodox Church - for Easter to be celebrated each year on the second or third Sunday in April.

The Age, January 16, reported this news item. It quoted Archbishop Welby as saying that, although agreement was 'very close', the change to a fixed date would not happen for five or ten years, because calendars are printed years ahead. A triumph for ecumenical action?

Joan McRae

UnitingCare

Pancake Day

On the 9th of February it was pancake day, or Shrove Tuesday. The young adults thought that it would be good to celebrate by cooking some yummy pancakes in the beautiful grassed area of the Shepparton Uniting Church, Maude Street site.

In total \$430 was raised for UnitingCare Share Appeal in a joint effort from the night and from Cafe Praxis North East a week and a half later.

It was pleasing to see the turnout

of people who had come to help organise, cook, clean dishes and eat the yummy pancakes with many different toppings to choose from, to show their support for the organisers and UnitingCare.

It was also great to have donations of eggs, lemons and homemade maple syrup from congregation members as well as Boysenberries from Belstack Strawberry Farm and bananas, apples and strawberries from Wintersun fruits.

Rob Graham



Assembly Action

Christmas, Easter and Pentecost

We have recently celebrated Christmas. The next major celebration in the Christian year is Easter, followed by Pentecost. These are the three major events in the Christian calendar. Theologically if I was to use one word for each of these it would be as follows: Christmas – incarnation, Easter – reconciliation, and Pentecost – empowerment. I will expand on this.

Christmas is about incarnation. God not only sent prophets to enable us to know something of the word and character of God but finally sent his Son into the world. The word ‘incarnation’ means God with us. In the coming of Jesus, God the Son came to us to live our life, go through death and be raised to be with God. As Paul puts it “though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name above every name” (Philippians 2: 6-9). God loved the world and the people he created so much that God was willing to have Jesus identify fully with our earthly human existence. God in Christ experienced the highs

and depths of human life. Jesus came to usher in the reign of God, God’s rule of love, peace and justice, through teaching, example and non-violent symbolic action. In Jesus we are able to see the nature and purposes of God. Again Paul says it clearly, “He is the image of the invisible God” (Colosians 1:15). Through all Jesus said and did we have a clear indication of what God is really like. God is Christlike. In Jesus Christ we have the clearest sign of God for God was with us in Jesus the Son.

Easter has to do with reconciliation. In his life and ministry Jesus was engaged in enabling people to be reconciled to God and one another. He brought people fullness of life by healing them of physical problems, forgiving sins, and enabling people to be restored in their relationships with one another and God. The supreme instance of this was his refusal to turn from his ministry of announcing the reign of God and enacting it in words and actions even when it brought him into conflict with the religious and political leaders of the day. The religious leaders were deeply offended that he was acting on behalf of God in his parables of the kingdom of God and in pronouncing sins forgiven. His prophetic criticism of them led them to seek ways to discredit him and be rid of him. Not being

able to trick him into saying things that would incriminate him with the authorities, they then took drastic action to have him betrayed and handed over to the Roman authorities to be executed. Jesus was fully aware of the danger he was in but did not change his approach or flee. Instead he accepted that to fulfil his mission he had to be willing to face an excruciating death. He did this not just as a martyr but as a representative person. He faced the cross representing sinful humanity willing to die from an unjust sentence. He was in fact the only innocent one and his accusers were the guilty ones. He was crucified demonstrating God’s costly love and desire for reconciliation with sinful human beings. God in Christ took on himself the pain and suffering of people. On the cross Jesus experienced even what it was like to feel abandoned by God. Yet God was with Jesus wanting people to know the forgiveness and reconciliation God held out to them.

Pentecost is about empowerment, empowerment by the Spirit of God. Following the surprising events of the resurrection the disciples were unsure what to do next. They had experienced the risen Jesus on a number of occasions and were convinced that God had really raised him from the dead. They were told to wait in Jerusalem for the coming of the Spirit. Luke has the risen Jesus respond to their question about when God’s kingdom will come by saying it is not for them to know, but they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them. They will be Jesus’ witnesses “in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8). They are to continue the ministry and



mission of Jesus and do so as his witnesses. Not in their own strength and according to their own leading but with the Spirit empowering and guiding the mission they are to go forward. In doing so, they will not only go to their own people in Jerusalem and Judea but cross cultural boundaries to share with even Samaritans. Their task is not limited to people with some ethnic affinity but will take them to all people, to the ends of the earth. The Spirit will guide the mission opening up opportunities. They will establish communities of Jesus followers who will be witnesses in their own areas. Luke presents the day of Pentecost as a dramatic coming of the Spirit upon the disciples. John on the other hand has the risen Jesus say to the disciples, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." He then breathed on them and said "receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:21-22). There have been times in Christian history when groups of people have experienced the Spirit in dramatic ways. All Christians can know the presence of the Holy Spirit enabling and guiding them.

As we celebrate the major Christian events we do so knowing that God is our heavenly Father and Mother, Jesus is the Son and the Spirit are bound together in a Trinity of love who reaches out to all of us. God desires us to know that he is with us, God sent his Son that we might be reconciled to God and one another, and the Spirit empowers us to live as God's people, witnesses to Jesus seeking God's reign.

Rev Dr Chris Walker

January 5, 2016



Frontier Services

A New Frontier

2016 marks a new beginning for Frontier Services.

After significant operational changes last year, we feel like we are out the other side. With a very lean and energetic team going ahead, Frontier Services remains focused on the provision of pastoral and outreach services across remote Australia.

This year heralds a historic collaborative relationship with Uniting Church synods and presbyteries. In this partnership model Frontier Services continues to fundraise for the provision of all Patrol Ministries, whereas the management and administration of individual patrols rests with the synod or presbytery where they are located. Frontier Services will maintain primary responsibility for

raising the funds to keep patrols active into the future.

Frontier Services continues to operate its popular volunteer program Outback Links, a national program with over 1,500 volunteers assisting people in remote areas helping in many capacities. Outback Links has recently forged partnerships with corporate entities such as NRMA and will continue group trips of tradespeople to help drought-distressed communities with trips planned for April and May this year.

Grahame Ryan, Acting National Director of Frontier Services.

5th February 2016

Faith in Action

Ecumenical Work Camps



First works camp at St Philip's College, 1964.

If you have been around the Uniting Church for a period of time, particularly in Victoria, there is no doubt that you would have heard about the working parties in Central Australia or even have been on one.

The first work party to be sent to Alice Springs was from Victoria, under the charge of Rev Fred McKay in 1956. Alan English was proud to be a part of this first journey, recalling travelling in his 1953 Holden as part of a convoy of 7 vehicles to Alice Springs to complete work on the John Flynn Memorial Church. Alan says he was involved in quarrying the stone for and building the fore-court to the church. At the time, the road from Port Augusta to Alice Springs was not sealed

and so was boggy at times from the September rains. Alan recalls being the only one with a tow ball and having to tow other cars out when they got bogged. In particular, the majesty of the carpet of Sturt Desert Pea and the blanket of undisturbed stars still stick in his mind. About as remote as it gets! While there was a lot of travelling (7 days each way from Melbourne) there was also a lot of time for fellowship and faith sharing, swapping around in cars to share the company and bible studies in the evenings.

This was the beginning of Rev Fred McKay's legacy in the red centre, where he notably built St Philip's College- beginning as a boarding school for remote students in 1965, taking in its

first round of day students in 1989. The Frontier Services work parties were officially started as an annual event with the construction of St Philip's College in 1964. These work parties have been vital for the structural work and upkeep of St Philip's College in Alice Springs, with work also completed at Old Timers nursing home and the John Flynn Uniting Church and among other Frontier Services pre-schools, clinics, aged care facilities and Patrol Padre manses. These days, work party members from all over Australia fly to Alice Springs or take an easier drive with sealed roads all the way.

2014 saw the celebrations of the boarding school (50 years) and the day school (25 years) as well as the 50th anniversary of the Frontier Services work parties. This year marks 60 years since the very first work party which Alan attended and since the opening of the John Flynn Memorial Church.

The work parties are still running but after a restructure of Frontier Services in 2015, are now run by and for St Philip's College itself.

Jen Shields



Lois Hurse and Rev. Fred McKay, 1964.



1955, John Flynn Memorial , Alice Springs.

Synod Snippets

Stand For Sanctuary

More Uniting Churches in Victoria have declared that they will offer sanctuary to asylum seekers facing deportation to Nauru.

St John's Uniting Church in Essendon was the first church in Victoria to publicly state its intention to invoke the ancient Christian tradition. This was followed by Manningham Uniting Church, Wesley Uniting Church (Melbourne), St Andrew's Uniting Church (Chelsea), Habitat Uniting Church, Croydon North Uniting Church, Brunswick Uniting Church and St Andrew's Uniting Church (Fairfield).

UnitingJustice Australia national director Rev Elenie Poulos appeared on 2GB on Sunday to speak about the church's offer of sanctuary.

"We're really excited and overwhelmed by the amazing response of churches around the country that are willing to say 'enough is enough,'" she said.

"We are prepared to engage in acts of civil disobedience and offer them sanctuary because we believe we should let them stay.

"It's just ludicrous to think that sending babies to Nauru can 'stop the boats'"

The church's stance has won the support of Australia's international aid sector, community service agencies, unions and other faith communities.

Ali Kadri, spokesman for the Islamic Council of Queensland, expressed the Islamic communities' support for the sanctuary movement.

"We commend the leadership shown by the leaders of the Christian community and as

people of faith, we stand with them," Mr Kadri told the Brisbane Times.

"We will offer the same thing in two mosques and, if asylum seekers enter Dr Peter Catt's church, I will go and stand in solidarity with our Christian brothers and sisters. I will stand right next to Dr Catt, shoulder to shoulder and if I am arrested, so be it."

Premiers from all six states and the ACT chief minister have pledged to take in the 267 asylum seekers. This unprecedented wave of support began on Saturday when Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews wrote a letter to Malcolm Turnbull, urging him to let the asylum seekers stay in Australia.

"A sense of compassion is not only in the best interests of these children and their families. It is also in the best interests of our status as a fair and decent nation," Mr Andrews wrote.

"There are infants among this group who were born in this country. Sending them to Nauru will needlessly expose them to a life of physical and emotional trauma."

Ms Poulos said she was heartened by the response of the premiers.

"It goes to show you what can happen when people start stepping out into the public space and offering moral leadership," Ms Poulos said.

"We're now seeing political leaders around the country coming on board and saying that it's not good enough, that Australia needs to do better.



"The world is now watching us; there's been enormous international interest in what's happening here."

On Monday, public demonstrations took place in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Darwin, Hobart, Canberra and regional centres throughout the country. An estimated 6,000 people attended the Melbourne rally outside the State Library of Victoria.

Hundreds of Australian schoolteachers will protest against the deportation of asylum seekers to Nauru on Wednesday and Thursday. They will hold signs saying "Let them stay – education not detention" and share their photos on social media.

Glenroy College principal Paul Dingle said he was prepared to risk jail by speaking out about the plight of three students at his school, who are waiting to be flown back to Nauru.

"We want all young people to learn and be better citizens," Mr Dingle told The Age.

"These students have expressed their joy at being at school, being able to interact with peers in a relatively free environment and to be learning. It would be a traumatic experience to have that cut off and for them to have to go back to a place like Nauru."

Tim Lam

10th February 2016

Count Down to Christmas

Learning About Jesus

For seven years the Shepparton Uniting Church, and the former South Shepparton Congregation before that, have been running a three half-day event called Count Down to Christmas. Many of you have probably heard from the adults involved that it is a fantastic program filled with fun, laughter, art, craft, puppets and songs that children, Kinder and Primary school ages, can learn about the Christmas Story. It also gives those in Secondary School the chance to take on Leadership roles and work with the young children.

Here at the Vine we thought that it would be a great idea to hear from the kids themselves that are involved with the program. so we headed down to Countdown to Christmas from the 21st to 23rd of December 2015 and asked eight children and teenagers three simple questions;



Sam, age 10:

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas? Jesus. Christmas was Jesus' Birthday.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us? Jesus will always look after us.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? Crafting, making baby Jesus' cottage.



Sapina, age 11:

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas? Learning more about Jesus' Birthday.

Birthday.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us?

Jesus was born to show us how to be wise and do the good things.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? Craft and colouring.



Stella, age 8;

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas? Jesus is the reason for the Season. The puppets always say it.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us? Jesus being born.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? Playing poison ball.



Reagan, age 7;

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas? It's a special day (Christmas),

because it is Jesus' birthday.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us?

Jesus is a baby and he is a king.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas?

That the puppets were singing about songs.



Lana, age 6;

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas? It's fun to decorate things.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us?

Jesus was born on Christmas.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? Playing games. I love playing games.



Zane, age 4;

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

Puppet jumped away into his pocket.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us?

Make a song about baby Jesus.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? Christmas. Playing with the play dough.



Antonio, Peer Helper, age 12;

What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas?

What is the stars main purpose. That is was the star that the three wise men used to guide them to Jesus.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas

Story tells us?

The gifts. That usually people are given gifts but you should be happy to give them. Seeing others Happy ,that was Jesus' dream for peace.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? Friends, as well as meeting new ones.



Clare, Peer
Helper, almost 13;
What have you learnt about at Count Down to Christmas?

A bit more about the new years and how each year is another year after Jesus is born. How to communicate with little kids as a leader.

What do you think is the most important thing the Christmas Story tells us?

Christmas is about welcoming Jesus into the world.

Sometimes we forget about that.

What has been the best part of Countdown to Christmas? I liked the puppets and helping with the games.

Melissa Graham

For The Kids

Have Fun!

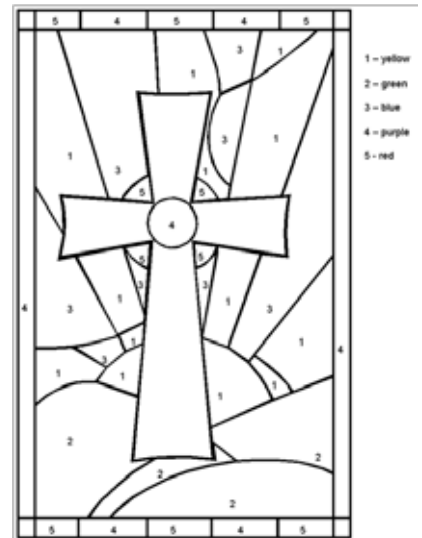
THE JELLY BEAN PRAYER

Red is for the blood He gave.
Green is for the grass He made.
Yellow is for the sun so bright.
Orange is for the edge of night.
Black is for the sins we made.
White is for the grace He gave.
Purple is for His hour of sorrow.
Pink is for our new tomorrow.

A bag full of jelly beans
colorful and sweet,
Is a prayer, is a promise,
Is a special treat.

HAPPY EASTER!

- Adapted from Charlene Dickensen, 1997



BibleWise
Jesus is Alive Maze

Early Easter morning, Mary Magdalene visited Jesus' tomb. The stone had been rolled away, and Jesus was not in the tomb. She was very sad because she thought someone had taken Jesus' body.

Then Mary saw a man she thought was the gardener. She was so happy to see the man was Jesus! She ran to tell the disciples Jesus was alive.

Help Mary find her way to Jesus tomb.

How many Easter eggs can you put in an empty basket?
Only one - after that it's not empty anymore!

How does Easter end?
With the letter R!

Why did the Easter egg hide?
He was a little chicken!

Uniting World

Fiji Emergency Appeal



Our friends in Fiji are suffering widespread destruction in the aftermath of Category 5 Cyclone Winston, which hit on Saturday 20 Feb. Winston is the largest recorded cyclone to hit the Pacific.

Twenty-one people are confirmed dead, four missing and more than 2,300 people are still sheltering in 71 evacuation centres. Whole villages have been destroyed, particularly on the island of Koro where a relief and assessment ship is being deployed.

UnitingWorld staff member Rev Dr Cliff Bird reports from Suva:

“The destruction has been widespread and very bad. The Lau group of islands, Koro Island, villages on Vanua Levu and their township Savusavu have been hit very badly. Hundreds of homes

have been lost, infrastructure damaged, farms, vegetable gardens, livelihoods destroyed. Water and power supply to many areas are still down.”

Our partner, the Methodist Church in Fiji, is the largest denomination in the country, covering an extensive network across 55 districts.

National Director of UnitingWorld Rob Floyd has spoken with President of the Church, Rev Tevita Bainivanua and has offered immediate emergency relief and longer term disaster recovery.

Fiji’s President Rev Tevita has opened all church buildings for emergency shelter and has directed ministers throughout the country to assess and report on

the extent of the damage, with a Disaster Response Team set up. The loss of life has been largely limited due to the preparedness of the government of Fiji, with communities advised early of the location of 700 emergency shelters via media and an extensive network of church communications. Curfews also helped to limit injuries.

All funds raised through this appeal will be used to support UCA church partner’s relief efforts, including re-establishing healthcare and schools, replanting crops and livelihoods and ‘building back better’ to safeguard communities against future cyclones.

Call UnitingWorld on 1800 998 122 or visit www.unitingworld.org.au

Article from <http://crosslight.org.au/2016/02/23/-fiji-emergency-appeal/>

Around the Congregation

Congratulations To....



Antonio Vaitohi who has broken two Shepparton under 13 boys records this year. He broke the 100 metre sprint race record with a new time of 12.46 seconds and the shot-put record that has stood for 19 years with a throw of 11.22 metres as featured in the Shepparton News paper. Not bad for someone who has only

been in Australia since last year!

Over the weekend of the 20th and 21st of February 2016 Antonio also won Gold medals in both under 13 boys 100 metres (in 12.33 seconds) 200 metres (in 25.25 seconds) at Regional Track and Field. He was just shy of the Northern country records for both.

Congratulations also to Antonio’s younger brother Christian, who only 10 weeks after a broken foot won a Bronze medal in the under 10 boys 200 metre and a bronze for the discus. Discus being a brand new event for him.

It would seem we have some up and coming super star track and field athletes in our midst. Congratulations boys.

If you have some news, event photos, past or present, articles, prayers for others or thoughts that you wish to share with the congregation please feel free to contact the publicity committee at publicity@sheppartonuc.org.au or drop it off into the box in the front foyer of the Shepparton Uniting Church. Our next issue will cover the months of June, July and August.

Individual Profile

Beth Stewart

Born: As Beth Ducat on Feb 6th 1926 in Shepparton.

Family life: Middle child and only daughter, Beth married on Feb 5th 1949 to Jock after meeting at a dance. They have four children, Fay, Anne, Hugh and John -12 Grandchildren and 21 Great Grand Children.

Beth describes herself as “a child of the depression” when times were very tough for every one –including farmers –and prices were low. There weren’t many cars on the road as they were not affordable, parts were unavailable and petrol was rationed. Almost everyone was scratching to make ends meet and to make a living!

Education and Work: Attending Ardmona Primary School, Beth walked there every day and fondly remembers principal Mr Burke for the extra tuition students were given to ensure they received a scholarship to go onto secondary school.

Riding her bike to secondary school from Ardmona to Shepparton High for her first year before School buses were

introduced.

Beth had wanted to be a nurse “forever” so after completing leaving Certificate (Year 11 these days) she was accepted as a student nurse at Mooroopna Base Hospital and ended up in charge of the 40-bed men’s Medical ward.

Faith journey: Beth’s church life in her formative years was as a member of the Ardmona Anglican Church where as well as attending she was baptised, confirmed and married.

She attended Union Sunday School held at the Ardmona Public Hall along with about fifty others and six teachers each week. Beth laughed as she clearly remembers being told that they were “rescuing” the perishing and singing “Hear the pennies dropping”.

Day-to-day living was intertwined with prayers before bed and grace before meals.

There was always faith, grace and prayer at home as well as at worship.

Beth and Jock agreed to attend worship at the Dookie Presbyterian Church. Beth’s interest and skill with gardening and flowers saw

these gifts from God utilised in beautiful wedding bouquets, church flower arrangements and for a host of other functions

Beth is very grateful to God for the many friendships formed through various UCAF groups at Dookie, Scots and now as a combined Shepparton Congregation as she celebrates her 90th Birthday.

Beth’s faith journey and God’s gifts of strength and courage are integral every day to every part of her life!!

As this article was being prepared a number of funny stories came out –Beth quickly added “but don’t include that”. So you might have to have a personal conversation with Beth to get the full story!

Prepared by Jeni Fitzgerald



A Letter From Beth

To the members of the Uniting Church Shepparton,

Dear Friends,

Thank you for remembering me on the occasion of my 90th Birthday. I do enjoy fellowship with you all.

Sunday mornings are special to me when we gather together to worship God.

I am very fortunate to have good friends to help me with transport now that my sight is not perfect.

Your Sincerely

Beth Stewart

Vanuatu Mission Volunteering to help those in need

In April I am off to Vanuatu for a week as a volunteer for a building project organised by Uniting World and The Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu.

The project involves upgrading and improving existing church owned accommodation. The apartments will be used for short term and long term housing. The apartments will be used as an income generating program that will provide the PCV with money to be put towards future Disaster

Risk and Recovery projects.

One commissioning response we use is, each one of us is given a gift by the Spirit: and there is no gift without its corresponding service. This raises a question I quite often find myself thinking about what is my gift and how do I use my gift to service others.

I ask you for prayerful support as I take on this adventure.

Cam Shields

Shepparton Uniting Church Building Project Update

As of 1/2/2016

A significant milestone has been reached– Three builders have been invited to tender prices for the construction portion of our project!

We have support from the wider church for our project. Both Synod and Presbytery want to see our project completed. It is important that congregational members understand that Synod Property Services and ultimately Synod Property Board are the only groups that can allow our project to commence.

Synod Property Services, which oversees our project, is involved with 42 other projects with a portfolio value of \$832 million dollars (2014 report).

To allow our project to commence Synod Property Services must be convinced that Shepparton Uniting Church can complete the project within its allocated budget. To help with this process the Synod have appointed Northwind Quantity Surveyors (at Synod's expense) to assist with our project.

It is envisaged that the Quantity Surveyors amongst other things will reconcile the tender prices with their own pricing to ensure that the project budget can be complied with. There may need to be adjustments made to ensure compliance.

In December the PPTG asked our Lead Designer Peps Plans to invite three builders to participate in the tender process. All 3 builders have submitted prices.

The PPTG and the appointed

Quantity Surveyors will examine the prices submitted in order to proceed to what we hope will be the most significant phase of the project- Actual Construction.

There has been much activity behind the scenes i.e. important paperwork has been forwarded to Presbytery where it has been approved. Quotes have been sought and received for other project works e.g. tree removal.

Project budget

The project budget currently stands at \$1.9 million dollars.

The project budget is designed to allow for payment of all items listed below:

(a) Construction of building, Op Shop extension, car park (46 spaces) and compliance with planning permit.

The tender prices discussed above only include the construction portion of the project works.

Additional items which need to come from the project budget include -

(b) Audio Visual (AV) system for new worship space and existing building;

(c) Furniture and fittings;

(d) Tree removal- remove existing trees;

(e) Landscaping materials;

(f) Powercor direct cost- mandatory undergrounding of electricity supply;

(g) Contingencies- this is a mandatory budget requirement

(nominal 5% of tender price);

(h) Consultants and other fees which have been paid /accrued to 31/12/2015;

(i) Consultants and other professional fees from Jan 1 2016 to project completion;

(j) Other minor costs e.g. title consolidation.

It is important that members of the congregation understand that the construction portion of the project works are only part of the total project costs.

Zane Streeter Secretary PPTG



Your Say

A Letter to the Editor

Your item Synod Snippets - a strategic review (Edition 4, Spring 2015) set me thinking. I don't hold back with my thoughts even if they hit close to home.

It is a collective compilation aiming at a vision for the future. It is very hard to buck established traditions and equally mind sets can be much more rigid than will be appreciated. Ministers can go through a full theological training and retain their mother-hood understanding as at their entry into faith. Although we are formally a Uniting Church the influence of former allegiances can still be present. There are some improvements, more especially with newer hymns. However in many ways the ritual

of worship differs little from that of our fore fathers. The sermon is very much a sacred cow and most ministers would consider this as a main plank in the worship presentation (and yet for many who suffer, it is repetition of what has been said many times before). A few ministers are outstanding teachers who introduce the works of modern theologians to provoke new thinking. These are few and far between. Ministers can be well read, but squib it when it comes to being provocative.

Perhaps one of my concerns is that the sense of belonging and intimacy is sadly lacking. It can be found in small groups which are often the same familiar faces. No doubt they do useful work, but of a Sunday we are mostly meeting nodding acquaintances. People move out for a cup of tea and gravitate to talk with a few close

friends. There can be a few words of 'how are you?' and that is that. The minister may be present as people leave, but quickly disappears.

In listing principles for which we agree it is easy to formulate a recipe. Recipe religion has been thrust upon us since the days of religious tracts. However we do have to start somewhere. We are making some headway at recognising the importance of the environment and what is happening to the Earth's climate. It is certainly desirable to find new ways to express the gospel. The resolution to work with the Anglicans should be a point of entry in a new partnership. In some ways they are as much bogged down as we are. Together under God's Grace we might just turn over a new leaf.

Alan English

Preaching Plan

March 2016

March 2016	6th Lent 4	13th Lent 5	20th Passion/ Palm Sunday	24th Maundy Thursday	25th Good Fri	27th Easter Day
9.30am Shepparton Afternoon/ Evening	Loni HC Tues 8th 7:00pm Youth Focus	Rosalie	<u>Loni & Rosalie</u> <u>Messy Church</u> <u>@ Mount Major</u>	<u>7pm Rosalie</u>	<u>9:30am Rosalie</u>	7.00 am Rosalie 9:30am Loni 2:00pm Kialla Gardens Rosalie HC
Dookie 9.00am	Joan Hall	Loni HC	<u>Joan McRae</u> <u>Mount Major 6:30 pm</u>	No Service	No Service	Rosalie
Pine Lodge 11.00am	Joan Hall	No Service	No Service	<u>7.30pm Loni</u>	No Service	No Service
Kialla West 11.00am	No Service	Loni	No Service	No Service	No Service	No Service
Katandra West 11.00am	No Service	No Service	<u>Joan McRae</u>	No Service	No Service	No Service
Lectionary Readings	Jos. 5:9-12 Psalm 32 2 Cor 5:16-21 Lk 15:1-3, 11b-32	Isaiah 43:16-21 Psalm 126 Philippians 3:4b-14 Jn 12:1-8	Is 50:4-9a Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 Philippians 2:5-11 Lk 19:28-40	Isaiah 52:13-53:12 Psalm 22 Hebrews 10:16-25 John 18:1-19:42	Acts 10:34-43 Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24 1 Cor 15:19-26 Lk 24:1-12	

Preaching Plan

April / May 2016

April 2016	3rd Easter 2	10th Easter 3	17th Easter 4	24th Easter 5
9.30am Shepparton	HC Rosalie	Loni Tues 12th 7:00 pm Youth Focus	Joan McRae 4:30pm Messy Church Rosalie	Rosalie & Loni 2.00pm Kialla G Brian
Dookie 9.00am	Loni HC	Shirley Marven	Loni HC	Elders
Pine Lodge 11.00am		No Service	Loni HC	No Service
Kialla West 11.00am	No Service	Shirley Marven	No Service	No Service
Katandra West 11.00am	Loni	No Service	No Service	No Service
Lectionary Readings	Acts 5:27-32 Psalm 118:14-29 Revelations 1:4-8 John 20:19-31	Acts 9:1-6 Psalm 30 Revelations 5:11-14 John 21:1-19	Acts 9:36-43 Psalm 23 Revelations 7:9-17 John 10:22-30	Acts 11:1-18 Psalm 148 Revelations 21:1-6 John 13:31-35

May 2016	1st Easter 6	8th Easter 7	15th Pentecost	22nd Trinity	29th Pentecost 2
9.30am Shepparton Afternoon/ Evening	HC Rosalie	Loni Tues 10th 7:00pm Youth Focus	Rosalie 4:30pm Messy Church	Loni & Rosalie 2.00pm Kialla G Brian	Loni
Dookie 9.00am	Loni	Brian Hardy	Loni HC	Elders	10:30 am Combined Service at Pine Lodge Joan Fisher
Pine Lodge 11.00am	Loni	No Service	No Service	No Service	
Kialla West 11.00am	No Service	Rosalie	No Service	No Service	
Katandra West 11.00am	No Service	No Service	Loni HC	No Service	
Lectionary Readings	Acts 16:9-15 Psalm 67 Revelations 21:10, 22-22:5 John 14:23-29 Or John 5:1-9	Acts 16:16-34 Psalm 97 Revelations 22:12-14 John 17:20-26	Genesis 11:1-9 Acts 2:1-21 Psalm 104:24-35 Romans 8:14-17 John 14:8-17	Proverbs 8:1-4 Psalm 8 Romans 5:1-5 John 16:12-15	1 Kings 18:20-39 Psalm 96 Galatians 1:1-12 Luke 7:1-10

Upcoming Events

March - May 2016

March 2016

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	1 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 10am Worship Ava Maria 1:30pm Crazy Whist 7pm Youth Group	2 10am Church Council Executive	3 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 4pm Together in Voice	4 5pm KUCA	5 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	6 9:30am Worship
7	8 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist 6pm Youth Dinner 7pm Youth Service	9 7:30pm Church Council	10 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 10:45am Worship Banksia L 1:30 pm Worship at Hakea L 2pm Fellowship Group 4pm Together in Voice	11	12 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	13 9:30am Worship
14	15 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 10am Worship Ava Maria 1:30pm Crazy Whist 7pm Youth Group	16 1:30pm UCAF	17 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 10:00am Mercy Aged Care 4pm Together in Voice	18 5pm KUCA 6:30pm Cafe Praxis	19 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	20 Palm Sunday 9:30am Worship 6:30pm Mt Major Service
21 7pm Holy Week Service	22 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist 2pm Worship Acacia House 7pm Holy Week Service	23 7:30pm Women's Evening Group 7pm Holy Week Service	24 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 4pm Together in Voice 7pm Maundy Thursday Service	25 9:30am Good Friday Service Dookie Family tea	26 8am Men's Breakfast 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	27 Easter Sunday 7am Sunrise service at Victoria Lake 9:30am Worship 2pm Kialla Gardens Service
28	29 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist	30	31 4pm Together in Voice			

April 2016

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				1 5pm KUCA	2 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	3 9:30am Worship
4	5 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 10am Worship Ava Maria 1:30pm Crazy Whist 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	6 10am Church Council Executive	7 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 4pm Together in Voice	8	9 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	10 9:30am Worship
11	12 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist 6pm Youth Dinner 7pm Youth Service 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	13 7:30pm Church Council	14 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 10:45am Worship Banksia L 1:30 pm Worship at Hakea L 2pm Fellowship Group 4pm Together in Voice	15 5pm KUCA 6:30pm Cafe Praxis	16 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	17 9:30am Worship 4:30 Messy Church
18	19 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 10am Worship Ava Maria 1:30pm Crazy Whist 7pm Youth Group 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	20 1:30pm UCAF	21 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 10:00am Mercy Aged Care 4pm Together in Voice	22 Dookie Family tea	23 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	24 9:30am Worship 2pm Kialla Gardens Service
25	26 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist 2pm Worship Acacia House 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	27 7:30pm Women's Evening Group	28 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 4pm Together in Voice	29	30 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	

Upcoming Events

May 2016

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
30	31					1 9:30am Worship
2	3 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 10am Worship Ava Maria 1:30pm Crazy Whist 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	4 10am Church Council Executive	5 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 4pm Together in Voice	6 5pm KUCA	7 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	8 9:30am Worship
9	10 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist 6pm Youth Dinner 7pm Youth Service 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	11 7:30pm Church Council	12 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 10:45am Worship Banksia L 1:30 pm Worship at Hakea L 2pm Fellowship Group 4pm Together in Voice	13	14 1pm Wesley Social Indoor Bowls	15 Pentecost 9:30am Worship 4:30 Messy Church
16	16 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 10am Worship Ava Maria 1:30pm Crazy Whist 7pm Youth Group	17 1:30pm UCAF	18 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 10:00am Mercy Aged Care 4pm Together in Voice	20 5pm KUCA 6:30pm Cafe Praxis	21	22 Trinity Sunday 9:30am Worship 2pm Kialla Gardens Service
23	26 10am Craft Group 10am Friendship Group 1:30pm Crazy Whist 2pm Worship Acacia House 7:15pm Indoor Bowls	27 7:30pm Women's Evening Group	28 10am Multicultural Play G 10am Craft Group 4pm Together in Voice	27 Dookie Family tea	28 TBA Youth Group	29 9:30am Worship



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