

Morialta Vision ...in the Wilderness

– by the gift of the spirit we have not lost the way!

A Publication of Morialta Uniting Church

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Welcome to Vision in the Wilderness 20

– by the gift of the spirit we have not lost the way.

This is the last *Vision in the Wilderness* for 2020. We guess most of us will be happy to forget 2020 as we move into 2021 with hope for a vaccine, the peace that comes from good health, the joy of giving friends a warm hug, and hearts filled with excitement at the possibility of travel to visit family and friends.

We will be back at the beginning of Lent, with a slightly enlarged monthly edition, and we look forward to your contributions in 2021 – stories, events, photos and articles of less than 300 words are ideal, and hand-written pieces are fine.

The cut-off date for our first edition in 2021 will be Friday 29th January. Either drop a copy into Nicole at the Office, or call me (Colin) on 0427 122 106 or email me snout-n-bout@bigpond.com.au

May your hearts be filled with hope, peace, joy and love during Advent, Christmas and 2021. Go well.

Christmas at Morialta



Photos by Brian Corrigan

A different Christmas reflection

For some, Christmas is not a happy time, for whatever reason. This year in particular has been a challenge environmentally, socially, politically and physically with Covid-19 wreaking havoc across the planet.

Yet, in spite of that, I believe we have a gospel of hope, a message of good news to experience and share, even in spite of all the pain the world brings. We have faith in a God of hope, love and compassion, imagination and creativity, a God of new life and of birth, of which we celebrate at Christmas.

So what difference does Jesus make especially in the hard times, in these CV-19 times, in times when I'm feeling 'blue', sad, lonely, or angry? One answer lies in Jesus' response to a question posed by John the Baptist's disciples. They came to Jesus asking who he was and what they should tell John. Jesus said, tell him the blind see, lame walk, sick are cured, deaf hear, the poor and hurting have hope. (Luke 7 20-23) Jesus didn't say to tell John that the messiah is here, or the mighty king or prince of peace, or the miracle worker or some kind of superman who will fix your life in an instant. No, he said those who are hurting are finding release, healing and hope.

We live with a message of hope, for our faith asks us to journey with God even in, as psalm 23 says, the valley of the shadow of death, or pain, or loneliness. For it is here, and especially in these tough times, that Jesus walks with us as the Word made flesh and who dwells among us (John 1) And that is indeed great news in which we can rejoice! That is whose birth we recognise and celebrate at Christmas.

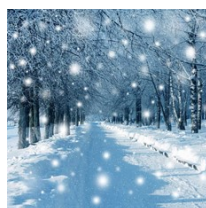
May you have a joyous, safe, reflective and meaningful Christmas and may the Babe of Bethlehem be with you!

Rev Bob

Christmas fractured? Christmas cancelled?

The day will come as any new day. We have a bright summer morning; others will wake to see the white of snow and ice

I am sharing a winter Christmas with my sister Beverley and brother-in-law, who are in total lockdown in Montreal. They are going to miss their usual trip to enjoy an Adelaide summer! The days there are already cold, grey and miserable!!



Fortunately I can see my sister's brilliant smile on Skype, and hear her contagious laughter. Ron sends gems of emails to my inbox each morning – thus any feeling of separation can be seen as an illusion! Added to that are photos sent and also phone calls. Thank you, technology!

So ... I would like to wish every one of you and your family a most blessed Christmas.

Regards, Cynthia Story

No one can cancel Christmas!

The light of one small candle - Arthur Gordon

'There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle...'

I have always remembered those words, not so much for their poetry and imagery as for the truth they contain. In moments of discouragement, defeat or even despair, there are always certain things to cling to. Little things, usually: remembered laughter, the face of a sleeping child, a tree in the wind – in fact, any reminder of something deeply felt or dearly loved."





Fellowship News

Fellowship finished a fragmented year with a wonderful Christmas lunch at the Highlander Hotel attended by 16 members.

We will restart on **Thursday 18th February** next year with a 'Picnic in the Park', and the AGM that was missed in November due to lock-down.

Margaret Clogg

Season's Greetings from the Library Team

Warm greetings to all, wishing you a joyful Christmas, and a safe and peaceful New Year blessed by our loving God.

Books can be borrowed as usual, by filling in the borrower's book, and returns should be placed in the returns box for later processing. Please use hand sanitizer before and after using the library.

Miranda, Jill and Joan



Strength of Friendship

I was in awe of the magnificence and vehemence of the love I was aware of when Michele Bennier told me on Saturday night how many of Judy Bennett's 1970s Methodist Youth Group friends had gathered together the night before, to share anguish and grief at the loss of their friend.

They held one another in consolation, and shared tears of disbelief and shock. There were those who weren't able to be there that night, and still those whose addresses were unknown, and maybe would not know about the tragedy. It would consume their thoughts.

But it was the connection that surprised me, the depth of the love within the group, a strength of friendship that is unbreakable.

I shouldn't have been surprised! I remember feeling that love and care myself from a God who works through his people. And we often think we don't make a difference.

Cynthia Story

Judy Bennett was killed recently when a tree branch fell on her car while driving through Sterling. Michele Bennier and Judy were members of the former Magill Methodist Youth Group in the early 1970s. Both Michele and Cynthia feel there would be those in the current congregation who would appreciate knowing this.

Santa Claus is anyone who loves another
and seeks to make them happy;
Who gives oneself by thought
in every gift that they bestow.
Edwin Osgood Grover

Love & science

From the editor - adapted from an article by Rev. Michael Barnes, Revesby (NSW) Uniting Church

"The best way to deal with fear is through love and science" – a statement made by the CEO of the Wayside Chapel, Jon Owen, while being interviewed on Radio 702.

The COVID-19 crisis has forced us to consider what our fundamental values are, and to whom we will listen for guidance. Whenever I seek out the voices of the marginalised and poor, I usually hear something that is both refreshing and challenging. Jon's comment is a pertinent example.

First, I appreciated Jon's reference to science. He's not proposing a romantic, sentimental solution that disregards the need for facts and sensible precautions.

Secondly, like many of you, I despair when I hear news of people fighting over toilet paper. Such behaviour shows the likely consequences of humanity's predilection to focus on self. How can people be so oblivious to the needs of others, especially in a time of crisis?

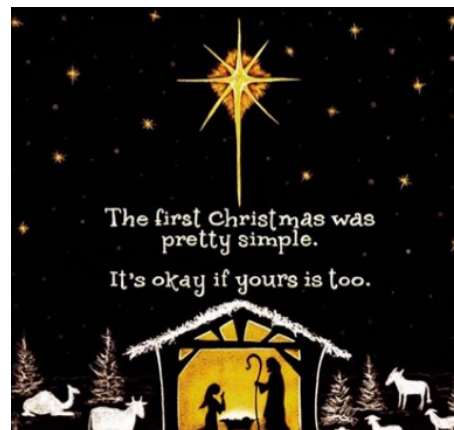
However, listening to Jon is a reminder of the way compassion extends beyond the bounds of our worlds, especially concerning those whose actions we disapprove of.

Let me quote from one of Jon's newsletters: 'When will we realise that all our panic buying is not going to save anyone? When will we realise that our health is only as safe as the most vulnerable person in our community? We build **up** our immunity, not **down**.' <https://www.waysidechapel.org.au/enough-to-go-around/>

I appreciate the way Jon frames the issues in terms of the welfare of the whole community, especially the vulnerable. This perspective is a potent antidote to the usual way people focus on self and immediate family. It's also a reminder about the power of love and compassion, and the way love can express itself.

Finally, his views bring a sense of hope. Fear need not be the final word, there is always the reality of love and the many ways to express love. Our fragile community needs such understanding and kindness.

Revesby UC is a community of people of all different ages, from many different backgrounds and they welcome anyone. They love food and play and sharing life together.





End of 2020 Pastoral Letter from the President, Dr Deidre Palmer

Adapted from Assembly Website

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus,” (1 Corinthians 1: 3-4)

I join with other members, expressing our gratitude for sisters and brothers in Christ who have been companions on the difficult journey through 2020. We also give thanks to God for the abundant grace of God that continues to shape our lives and who we are as the Church.

In this season of Advent, we reflect on the coming of Christ into our world with anticipation and hope. We also look to the end of 2020 – a year that has called for our endurance, our creativity and adaptability, and has caused us to draw deeply from the love and comfort of God that sustains us.

In this time of great disruption and significant change, we have talked about our priorities and what really matters, ... “It matters that we hold the light for one another. It matters that we bear witness to the Light who holds us all, that we testify to this light that shines its infinite love and mercy on us, across oceans, across borders, across time.” Advent 3, *Testify to the Light, The Advent Door, 2014.*

I write this letter of thanks to you for all you have done in this year to continue our life of worship, witness and service to Christ, as the Uniting Church in Australia. You have “held the light for one another” and I am deeply grateful to be part of this communion of Christ, this movement of the Holy Spirit, we call the Uniting Church.

At Christmas and in the New Year, may the light of Christ shine in your life, and be reflected in the communities in which you serve.

Grace and peace be with you.

Dr Deidre Palmer

An Advent Reflection

Fr. Brian Cavanaugh, TOR

During Advent opportunities for works of charity abound calling out for Christians from every side: a sack of food for a needy family, money dropped in a Salvation Army kettle, a donation to an Indian school, a toy for ‘Toys-for-Tots,’ etc. Unfortunately, these works of charity so easily can assuage the Christian conscience, while doing nothing to bring about a solution to the root causes of the problem.

Works of justice, on the other hand, follow the road less travelled, of Advent’s hope, to pursue solutions for difficult problems. Hope comes through works of justice rather than simply performing works of charity.



Coming Together

Lotjbadhan (Yorta Yorta) / B’yah’ad (Hebrew)

Promoted by the Council of Christians and Jews



On 6 December 1938, a delegation from the Australian Aborigines’ League (AAL) led by Yorta Yorta Elder William Cooper, walked from Footscray to the German Consulate in Melbourne, to lodge a formal protest against Nazi persecution of the Jews of Europe.

Sadly, at this time of a rise in far-right bigotry across society, there is new urgency to educate people about basic Human Rights, role-modelled by the actions of the determined activists of the AAL, who stood up for others whilst not having any rights of their own.

Australian legends, including – Kate Ceberano, Lior, Paul Grabowsky, Deborah Cheetham and others – celebrated the 82nd anniversary of this momentous occasion with a time for reflection to hear the story again and paying tribute to William Cooper along with members of the AAL. Let us continue to “Walk Together in Solidarity” to emulate their values.

Thanks to John Thornton for bringing this item to our attention.



On the Sunday before Australia Day (24th January 2021), many Uniting Church congregations across the country hold worship services to reflect upon and lament the effect of the invasion and colonisation of this nation upon First Peoples.

The observance of a Day of Mourning was endorsed by the 15th Assembly arising from a request of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). All Uniting Church congregations are invited to hold worship services that reflect on the effects of invasion and colonisation on Australia’s First Peoples and our identity as a nation.

The Day of Mourning is the beginning of a journey with Uniting Church and UAICC and First Peoples across the country.

It is monumental to have the Uniting Church stand and affirm who we are, our connection to country, our sovereignty, our life that has existed long before colonisation. Not just that, but the challenges for First Nations people having to survive, to find a voice, and to fight for justice that we as people desire. Ps Mark Kickett (UAICC).

It was important to acknowledge and remember the true history of our country. As Second Peoples it is important for us to confess our complicity in the historical and ongoing dispossession of First Peoples. When we see racism it is really important that we call that out and contribute to the healing of our relationship as First and Second Peoples through lament, confession and seeking forgiveness. Dr Deidre Palmer.

A Day of Mourning worship service will be live-streamed on Sunday 24 January 2021 from the Nunyara Conference Centre in Adelaide.

CHRISTMAS AT MORIALTA UC

Blue Christmas

21ST December at 7:30

*A time to pause
and remember*

Christmas Eve

24th December

7:00pm service

Christmas Day

25th December

9:00am service

Church Service

Sunday 27th December

9:30am

2021 Services

9:30am Sundays in January



Heart of Christmas

Dr. Brian Linard, *A Way to the Heart of Christmas*

A noted poet was once asked in an interview if he could explain one of his poems 'in ordinary terms.' He replied with some feeling, 'If I could say what I meant in ordinary terms I would not have had to write the poem.'

From the time of Christ's birth, the people of God have 'had to write a poem' to Christmas, composing a single multi-stranded paean of praise spanning the centuries, because ultimately the meaning of Christmas resists being fully spelled out 'in ordinary terms.'

A Prayer from UAICC

(Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress)

Pastor Mark Kickett of National UAICC



The scriptures speak to us from Isaiah 52:7; **How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God Reigns".**

Our Creator God, you have reminded us through the words of Isaiah, That you are the God of all creation and in that you show forth your love, your peace and your goodness in abundance.

Right now though, our Creator God, we as a collective nation are crying, hurting, grieving and struggling with fear and anxiety from the Coronavirus and are desperately in need of the healing and the loving touch that can only come from your hand.

As the First Peoples we recognised and lived in your abundant love and grace for millennia and our relationship with you was imbedded in the love and respect that we shared.

Therefore, we as First People of this Country, to whom you gave this Country too before time immemorial, now cry out to you on behalf of this Nation, to once again shine the light of your love, healing, blessing, care and peace upon us all, as we face the challenge of the Coronavirus.

Our Creator God, you are the Great Physician, you are the Great Healer, you are the Great Comforter, cover this nation with your goodness, and bring about complete restoration, so that with our united voices and hearts we might once again declare, "Our God Reigns".

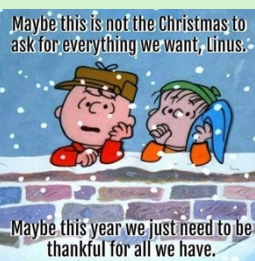
A different kind of request

In VitW 19 the Social Justice and Pastoral Care Teams and Fellowship invited the Morialta community to write Christmas cards to individual residents in aged care nursing facilities in our area. Many residents of these facilities have had a difficult year, often being confined to their rooms for long periods.

Special thanks to Judith Purling, Margaret Clogg, Betty McCormack, Gaynor Hallows and Rhonda Amber for taking time to contact the aged care nursing facilities.

Sincere thanks to the 12 Morialta folk who purchased and wrote cards and to Cynthia Story for donating cards for people to use.

On the lighter side...



What else could possibly go wrong this year?

