

Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO

The **Spirit**

163 DECEMBER 2023



**Flood anniversary
commemorated**

*Bianca Dyball lights a candle
at a vigil in Mooroopna*

The Bishop writes...

Dear Friends,

In this edition of *The Spirit* we read stories of rebuilding and recovery following the floods which swept through large parts of the diocese a year ago. We also read of the need to sit and wait upon the quiet words of God's Spirit through deep disappointment, and we celebrate the hope which comes at the prospect of new beginnings.

You will pick up this edition just before we celebrate Christmas and may be wondering how this content relates to Christmastide fare. It is a fair question as the obvious markers for the season seem to be absent this year. While we probably cannot claim a great overriding plan to present the different stories alongside our preparations to celebrate Christmas, it does strike me as being quite apt.

Place yourself for a moment in the sandals of one of God's people living about the time that Jesus was born. If you need a bit of help, Simeon may be of assistance. Luke writes, "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him." (Luke 2:25)

I wonder whether you have been in the position of 'waiting for consolation'? I have, more often than I would like, because there have been so many things which have caused the need for comfort. Simeon had been born into a nation under occupation, had probably seen his family's livelihood compromised, and had to navigate a dictatorial government and its troops.

This is all bad enough, but I do wonder whether his 'righteousness and devotion' made the pain even more acute. Simeon would have seen the sacred places desecrated and worship compromised. The daily activities of a people in covenant with God would have been made difficult to fulfil and God's silence amid it all would have been deafening. Simeon had life that was disappointing and difficult running up against his hopes and expectations for God's continued comfort.

As we look around the world, we see many 'Simeons' and 'Simonas' dealing with the

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*What do we do
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exact same reality as he. This edition of *The Spirit* reminds us that even if not so acute we too have the same challenge. What use is faith if our circumstance flies in the face of God's promise? What do we do with disruption, disappointment, and fragile hope?

As enjoyable as Christmas songs, gifts, holidays and feasting are, dealing with disruption, disappointment and fragile hope are the actual Christmas story. Simeon and his counterpart Anna (read her story just after Simeon's) are our models in preparing for the heart of Christmas. Amid the disruption and disappointment both Anna and Simeon had carried a tenacious hope that must have looked very modest and perhaps even a little mistaken to the harder heads around. Their hope was nurtured day after day and week after week as they hung about the forecourts of the temple waiting for an answer from God to their cry. And when the answer came, Simeon was so moved he was ready to die, 'may your servant now depart in peace,' because he had seen that through the waiting God's hand had held him.

For Simeon and Anna the long (and I suspect) very disappointing days of waiting would have probably felt lonely and as if God had forgotten them. For those days it was as if he had. But then all of a sudden God had not. The patience, the persistence,



Bishop Matt Brain

and even the disappointment found their fulfilment in Immanuel, Jesus, the child who is God with us and who would save his people from their sins.

So here is to tenacity in disruption, disappointment, and as yet unrealised hopes, but a tenacity held strong by God's secure hand which cradles the one prepared to cry out for help.

Your servant in Christ,

Matt



The music team at the public vigil

Vigil marks one year since floods

Simon Robinson

The evening of 14 October 2022 saw an eerie silence descend on Mooroopna as the flood waters began to rise. Team Saint Alban's found itself in the thick of the action – door knocking a third of the town with evacuation notices, relentlessly filling sandbags, leading, advocating, cleaning up, follow-up door knocking and ongoing flood chaplaincy.

Over 300 homes across the Greater City of Shepparton were damaged or destroyed in the flood. Most of those were in Mooroopna. Most of those homes have not been repaired and re-occupied because of the intransigence of insurance companies and/or the unavailability of tradies. Many businesses, and two churches, were damaged. The impact is ongoing.

Despite this Mooroopna remains tough, looking after one another as best they can. It is the privilege of our parish to serve this community. One year on, St Alban's led a small ecumenical team to mark the occasion with a public candlelight vigil at the heart of the town. The crowd was intimate and included civic leaders.

Bible readings, prayers and songs filled the night, but the heart of the memorial was the testimony of three flood-impacted residents. Neighbourliness and community were highlighted repeatedly. One testified as to how her faith helped her through. Two shared experiences of fear and exasperation as they were cut off from critical medical care when the causeway was closed, and the authorities left them for dead.

Despite years of lobbying, we lack a second, flood-secure river crossing. Another drew attention to run-down and insufficient infrastructure in Mooroopna like drainage, stops and pumps. Gardeners and artists and psychologists are being brought in to meet with people. That may be helpful, but it's like putting a band-aid on a cancer. We need breakthroughs with insurance companies, councils and governments.

When people are back in their homes; when infrastructure is fixed; when our shires are prepared for the next flood tomorrow, the emotional damage will eventually repair itself. So please pray for breakthroughs! But above all, pray for the recovery of Rochester, whose devastation was almost total, for our parish witness, and for Samuel Kelly, our Community Chaplain.



The congregation at Holy Trinity, Rochester

Rochester gets back to worship

Sue Jackel

Holy Trinity, Rochester reopened on 8 October after the devastating flood inundated nearly all houses and churches in the town in 2022. Holy Trinity has been restored but a lot of furniture has to be replaced, and we continue with sorting the many boxes of items to be put back in appropriate rooms.

We were warmly welcomed by St Mary's Lockington during the 12 months we were unable to access Holy Trinity, however the travel was hard for our congregation. Being without our spiritual home was sad for all of us but we look forward to worshipping together at Holy Trinity again.

There are still several residents living away from home. Some are from our congregation who we hope will return but others will not be back. People are gradually returning to their homes but for some it may be another 12 months before they can come back home.

The people of Rochester have been grateful for the support of many organisations from other towns. We do not know if Rochester will experience such trauma again but we pray that this will not happen.



The restoration team at Rochester

Sundays with Macca features Rochester

The Parish of Rochester was featured on 'Sundays with Macca' ABC radio recently, led by Mark Pearce, who was ordained in Bendigo but now ministers in the Diocese of Melbourne.

Mark's parish of Holy Trinity Surrey Hills and Mont Albert have generously supported the Parish of Rochester as the people work to get back into their homes and into their church.

"Rochy is doing it tough, a lot of people still not in their houses, living in caravans so we as a parish community decided we would support the people of Rochester... get people to go to Rochester, buy a coffee, have a look at the silos, stay the night and support that little community that's doing it tough."



Mark Pearce with Macca from ABC radio

Newbridge restored

Darcy Vaughan

On Sunday 8 November the Parish of Inglewood welcomed the Parish of Maldon and Bishop Matt to a special service commemorating a year since the floods of 2022.

The flooding of the Loddon River brought a few inches of water into St John's, Newbridge. Thanks to the valiant efforts of locals and the Stewart family the impact was lessened, however there was still enough damage to ruin the carpet and some of the furniture.

Thanks to support from the Registry Office the process of claiming from our insurers and getting the church back to its former glory was relatively straightforward. This recent one year anniversary was a special opportunity to celebrate the restoration of the building and to re-dedicate the church for God's glory.

The practice of the Parishes of Maldon and Inglewood joining together evolved from shared Zoom services during the Covid lockdowns, and this seemed like a great reason to get together and celebrate over an exemplary morning tea.



Bishop Matt and Darcy Vaughan
Photo courtesy of the Loddon Herald



Richard and Yasmine Bath

New ordinands ready for ministry

Richard Bath

I grew up in a committed Open Brethren family in Bendigo, and after completing a degree in Mechanical Engineering worked as a Quality Engineer in an automotive components factory in Melbourne for 10 years. That role involved extensive travel around the world where I was exposed to many different cultures. Through attending a couple of missions conferences I became increasingly convicted about having a heart for the lost.

I left my engineering job and studied at the Bible College of Victoria for one year, which then became several more years! Yasmine and I married, moved to Bendigo, and for most of the past 13 years have attended Holy Trinity in Flora Hill. We have two primary school aged children and Yasmine currently volunteers at a local homeless outreach and a couple of op shops.

Weeks before the 2020 pandemic while on a one-day retreat, I Peter 4:10-11 and John 21:15-17 were impressed upon my heart. In the past year several people unexpectedly encouraged me to consider ordination and provided wise counsel.

I'm someone who is passionate about the Good News of Jesus Christ being lived out and proclaimed wherever He places us. I will continue to work part-time as Applications and Training Coordinator for the mission agency Interserve while I serve as a deacon in the parishes of Heathcote and Strathfieldsaye. Interserve's vision is to see "lives and communities transformed through encounter with Jesus Christ", a vision I pray will be realised by God's grace in our region and beyond.

Lauren Porter

I was not raised in a Christian family, but always had a sense of God's presence in my life. It was while I was working with Asylum Seekers that I was first exposed to the concept of Pastoral Care. Soon after I committed myself to following the Way of Jesus, first with the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), where I met and married Mark. It was during this time that I followed God's call and undertook a Master of Clinical Counselling. I then pursued a career in Pastoral Care, working in hospitals, aged care and community services settings providing emotional and spiritual support. We joined the Anglican Church in Emerald in the Dandenong Ranges, where I had a believer's baptism.

Not long after my baptism I felt a call to ordained ministry, which I attempted to ignore, but a number of opportunities, including commencing theological training, led me to take seriously that call. At the beginning of 2020 we welcomed our daughter, Harriet and in 2022 we moved to Bendigo where I began work at St. Peter's Eaglehawk. At the end of next year I will have completed my Master of Divinity at Trinity College.

I am looking forward to seeing what God has in store for my ministry.



Lauren Porter with husband Mark and daughter Harriet



Heather Blackman, Peter Blundell, Elizabeth Dyke, Bishop Matt Brain, Peter Downes

New beginning for Parish of St Arnaud

Peter Downes

Three weeks ago Kathy and I arrived in St. Arnaud, ready for Bishop Matt to lay hands on me for my induction as the Parish Priest of St. Arnaud. I am hoping what they say about “60 being the new 40” is true, because I am now 65, have been in local church ministry for 42 years. If you had asked a handful of years ago would I be signing up for a new parish at this age my answer would have been “no!”

And let me say to any young people out there thinking about wanting to be a parish priest...don't do it! Don't do what I am doing! Unless...

Let me explain it this way. Last Sunday in church a visiting lady in the middle of my sermon when I was talking about life as the minister piped up loudly and said, “Why do you do this?”

Good question, I often ask myself the same thing. Especially on a Monday morning, or after a parish council meeting. Why am I a minister? Why do I put up with all the joys and trials of parish life when I could be doing a million and one other things?

I knew my answer straight away, but even so I hesitated. It wasn't something I wanted to blurt out. Finally I said to her, “Because I love God.” Then I dug the hole a little bit deeper and followed it up with, “...and I love him more now than I ever have.”

I'm just a chubby little baldy guy that loves God and wants other people to know him too. That's why I do it. You might have a different way of showing people God's love. Good on you if you do. For me, parish ministry is the thing.

Please pray for Kathy and me in our new role, and please also pray for the good people of St. Arnaud and Bealiba.

Remember the lost this Christmas

Tracey Wolsley

“She brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)

What a day! The Word became flesh, God embodied humanity to dwell with us, to ‘pitch his tent’ and be with us in the mess of this world. Yes, it is a mess, and yet we had no room for Him.

As we approach Advent and the Christmas season, we are reminded of the stark reality of having no room for God. Ponder that for a moment: no space for the long awaited One destined to save us. We may be tempted to say, “If I had been there that first Bethlehem night, I would have opened my home to Jesus, I would have let him in”. Oh, that our hearts would be so hospitable and welcoming.

However, when I consider Jesus words, “As you do for the least of these, you do unto me,” I am faced with the cold and stark reality that we do not always have room and that is reflected in a myriad of ways around the world. Wars, homelessness, poverty, violence, racism provide the evidence that we fall short. Nevertheless, as a

people of faith, people who know God's redeeming and saving love and seek to be his hands and feet in the world, we are to strive to be a blessing and bring hope and light into the darkness.

MinisTree Bendigo is one of the ways the diocese seeks to serve the disadvantaged in the CBD of Bendigo. Each week, Fiona Preston and I go out into the streets of Bendigo to minister to the homeless and rough sleepers of the community. Through simple acts of kindness, presence and deep listening, we nurture and build positive caring relationships with people. In addition, we distribute practical assistance with items such as blankets and knitted goods in winter and bottled water and snacks all year round. These are made possible through the generous donations of people from around the diocese.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this important work. Alongside the practical support, Fiona and I also offer prayer, the word of God and ‘church’ in the park. As you prepare for the season of Advent and then Christmas this year, please consider how you might welcome Christ anew in those around us, in those for whom there is no room in the Inn.



Ian Howarth welcomes Bishop Benny Lang-akan and Bishop Frenzel Piluden visiting Christ Church Castlemaine

Filipino Bishops visit Castlemaine

Barry Rainsford

Bishops Benny Lang-akan and Frenzel Piluden, two Filipino bishops, were welcomed to the morning services at Christ Church Castlemaine in October. They were part of a delegation from the Episcopal Church in the Philippines, visiting Australia to sign a new partnership with the Anglican Board of Mission's Anglicans in Development.

Bishops Benny and Frenzel come from the north of Luzon which is the large island in the north of the country. There are numerous tribes in their mountainous area with warfare and headhunting still a feature. As there is no local word for sorry, forgiveness needs to be expressed by actions.

They shared of the nature of their ministry, with caring for their

clergy and concentrating on pastoral care taking precedence over administration. Basic needs such as health, education and infrastructure are government responsibilities.

As the Republic of The Philippines was a Spanish colony before American missionaries came in 1903, the major Christian denomination is Roman Catholic. Thus, many politicians are unaware of the smaller number of Anglicans. Bible studies and lay ministry are expanding rapidly in the area. Story telling is a feature of education in schools and the church. Using local knowledge to explain difficult concepts, The Holy Trinity is compared visually to three fire-stones supporting a water-pot.

Their visit provided an interesting insight for the ministries in other parts of the Anglican Communion.

Book corner: Honest Advent

Katy Lambert

Honest Advent: Awakening to the Wonder of God-With-Us Then, Here, and Now, by Scott Erickson

"For those who are looking for something honest, something real, something with a little more human grit to it and a little less conventional red and green."

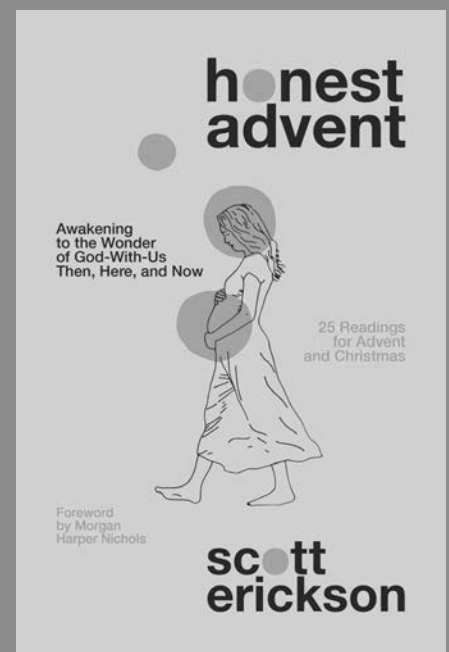
This book "illuminates the astonishing, hope-filled truth that the God who showed up in the hardest parts of our humanity is still doing so today."

This is a short daily devotional for Advent, approaching the birth narrative of Christ with an exploration of the human reality

of this story which only leads you into greater wonder.

It is indeed honest, includes some great illustrations to meditate on (Erickson's artwork is always thought-provoking), and brings the birth story of Jesus from a distant past to present reality. It is refreshing to approach the story in a new way reviving wonder and awe at the God who chooses to be with us in the messiness and vulnerability of this world.

I highly recommend reading this with others if you can so that you get to discuss what you read and what you think. The book is available from Koorong and Amazon.





MU Executive: Peter Dyke, Suzannah Daniels and Lauren Porter



National MU President Robin Ray



Ronda Gault, Leonie Strauch and Zan Daniels

The joy of service in relief ministry

Edward Barkla

Relief ministry was not something new to me after being priested in 2011. I had the pleasure of taking services regularly in a couple of parishes. Since retirement from my vocational work, service relief ministry has taken on a wider scope for me across the diocese.

It is a bit like a double-edged sword in a sense. There are a lot of times it is my first visit to a parish centre and associated churches. For the parishioners it can well be their first encounter with me the Ordained Pioneer Minister to the Cycling Community.

The blessing of the heartfelt country welcome on arrival is wonderful and gives a sense of God's peace and presence that He is in control in His house, God's people are on watch and willing and ready to extend the hand of fellowship of welcome to visitors like me.

There is a joy in watching parishioners' acts of service in making arrangements. From readers of the scriptures, prayers of intercession and singing of God's praises. It teaches me much about the diversity of service order styles, yet the same Spirit is the enabler. The commitment from the locals to take delight in taking part in the morning worship is a joy of the Lord our strength. It is heartwarming to see the pride in setting up the Lord's table with crisp white linen and candles, ensuring it is a table fit for the King Jesus.

Every visit that I have the privilege of being invited to attend is an opportunity to seek the face of God, to hear His voice and to know He is near and in control. The simple acts of service made by the faithful reveals the Lord Himself who did not come to be served but to serve.

Looking forward to seeing you on the road soon God willing.

MU enters new era

Suzannah Daniels

Over 60 people gathered from around the diocese at St Peter's, Eaglehawk to commemorate 120 years of Mothers Union in the Diocese of Bendigo.

We welcomed Robin Ray, the national president, who spoke to us about how the mission of MU, with God at its centre, seeks to both inwardly nurture members and be outwardly focussed locally and internationally.

Bishop Matt thanked Rev'd Peter Dyke for his three year's service as MU Chaplain and inducted Rev'd Lauren Porter into the role. We also welcomed five new MU members. In sync with the international MU theme

of transformation, at the AGM a motion was passed to trial a new organisational structure in 2024.

This meant thank you's to all of our current Executive. Special recognition went to Ronda Gault for many years of faithful service on Executive in varied roles, most recently as Secretary. Ronda has a wonderful gift and passion for uniting members through fellowship and our newsletter, *Linked Together*. Barry Rainsford was also recognised for 20 years of service in various roles, most recently as interim Treasurer.

We enjoyed a lovely lunch with live music, a trip down memory lane and displays from branches.



Dharrangdharrang

Message stick

Recently I had the opportunity to meet with the National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council at their 2023 annual gathering in Cessnock in the Hunter Valley Wine Country.

It was a time for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clergy and laity to come together and just sit and support each other after the devastating results of the referendum. The silence and tears among the members was deafening. Although we arrived in pain and wounded, I do feel as though a sense of healing took place as we came together to support one another

As I sit and reflect, I cannot help but keep seeing Jesus as he walked through the street carrying the load of the cross. The referendum took its toll on my people and I am so thankful to the Simon's of Cyrene who stepped in to help take up my cross when it got too heavy to bare.

One of the highlights of the gathering was having Bishop Matt join us for two days. Being taken out to a sacred sight on Wonnarua Country to the place where Baiame the Great Spirit overlooks the land below was such a soul changing experience, an experience I was given the opportunity to share with Bishop Matt. Words cannot even be found to express the feeling that took place.

Sometimes we need to just sit in silence and allow the spirit to talk to us and this is what took place sitting up in the cave overlooking the countryside below. So back to my question: "where to now?"

Sometimes we need to just sit in silence and allow the spirit to talk to us

I am looking forward to learning more about this amazing place we live in here in the Diocese of Bendigo. Learning more about the Dja Dja Wurrung Country and its history. By the grace of God, I will be able to bring you all along with me as I commence my journey here in Dja Dja Wurrung and wider communities.

It was also a wonderful surprise to learn that the Archbishop of Canterbury had sent out two of his colleagues to visit Australia. Martha Jarvis from the Anglican Communion is a permanent representative to the United Nations. Martha was here to help develop closer relationships between the First Nations Australians and the Anglican Communion based in London.

The Archbishop also commissioned Terry Duffy, a Liverpool based artist and designer, to hear the story of the First Nations people and return home and design him a cope. Terry brought with him the material design of the cope he designed for the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Canon Shannon

Aboriginal Communities Officer

How do I even begin? Or should I be asking "where to now?"

Let's just begin with a prayer written by Lenore Parker:

*God of Holy Dreaming,
Great Creator Spirit,
from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth. You spoke and the gum tree grew. In the vast desert and dense forest, and in cities at the water's edge, Creation sings your praise.
Your presence endures as the rock at the heart of our Land.
When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones: the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.
The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew, and bathed it in glorious hope. In Jesus we have been reconciled to you, to each other and to your whole creation. Lead us on, Great Spirit, as we gather from the four corners of the earth; enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and shame of the past into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ.
Amen*



Shannon Smith and Martha Jarvis

Youth and Families

Advent, Christmas, & Epiphany

We are coming up to a very busy time in the church calendar (and in all our calendars!) We move quickly through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. There's lots of activity and change in the church (do you notice all the changes in colour? Ask your parish priest about what they all mean). Below are some ideas for families or churches to take a moment to savour the seasons.

Nibbles

Advent is a time when we focus on the coming of Jesus, remembering his first coming which we celebrate at Christmas, but just as much looking forward to Jesus' second coming. Think about all that goes into preparing for guests to come at Christmas and all that Mary and Joseph did to prepare to bring Jesus into the world. What do we do to prepare for Jesus' return? Remembering Advent can be a very busy and stressful time as we come to the end of the year, make a bath bomb or stress ball as a gift for someone.

Bites

In the Church calendar the season of Christmas actually lasts for 12 days! (This is where the Christmas carol comes from). As a family, or as a church, think about how you could extend the celebration beyond the big day. Perhaps you could give a small gift to someone different everyday through the season? It doesn't have to be French hens, turtledoves or partridges! A postcard with a prayer, a baked good, or a handmade card are great ideas.

Chomps

After Christmas comes the season of Epiphany, which means 'appearance' or 'manifestation'. It is a celebration of one element of the story of Christ's birth, the visit of the magi, or wise-ones (they're not actually called kings, that comes from the song!) More than this, it is a celebration of the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles (that's us). Spend some time as a family star-gazing, or make star-shaped biscuits, and give thanks for the light of Christ. As you think about the hope which led the wise-ones, talk about your hopes for this year.



Archdeacon George

Youth and Families Ministry

When I worked in a bookstore there was a connected series of readers called Aussie Nibbles, Aussie Bites and Aussie Chomps. The fun thing about them was that you could tell which series a particular title belonged to by the size of the bite that had been taken out of the book!

This page of *The Spirit* will look at a particular theme or part of the bible and give you some suggestions of how you might take a nibble, a bite or a chomp into it with your family.

These ideas can be used at home for family time, as something for the kids (or adults!) during church, for Sunday School or an activity to do with the grandkids when they come up to visit.

Editor's Notes

Publishing Editor:

Sarah Crutch

03 5443 4711

thespirit@bendigoanglican.org.au

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February issue:
Contributions due by 26 January.

Photo of Bishop Matt on page 2 credit of Bendigo Advertiser.



Celebrating 60 years of ordained ministry

Bishop Ron Stone, George Thomas and Barry Rainsford have all recently reached their 60th anniversary of being in ordained ministry. They are pictured with Bishop Matt at a recent retired clergy gathering. We give thanks to God for the long and faithful ministries of +Ron, George and Barry!



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Gathering

Shannon Smith and Bishop Matt joined the annual gathering of NATSIAC, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council, held in Cessnock, New South Wales.

Read a reflection by Shannon Smith on page 10.

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