

Anglican Diocese of
BENDIGO

The Spirit

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The Blessings of a 'Pop Up' Church

Alice with Val Barker-Pigott

The Bishop writes...

Dear Friends,

The various artefacts which turn up relating to the people and places from the past are one of the curious and interesting parts of caring for an organisation with a long history. A year or so ago a large heraldic document for a long gone former bishop in the diocese was found. It is illuminated and full of very fine calligraphy, and even has several lead seals dangling from it. All of this to declare that said bishop had their own coat of arms established.

Each time I see the document I am struck by our desire to know our heritage. This is not a new phenomenon but the proliferation of documentaries and corporations relating to exploring our 'ancestry' certainly show this impulse is alive and well. There is another aspect which the heraldic document speaks to: our sense that having something important about our past is to be valued. The selling point for the TV shows and even the heralds is that we may uncover a famous or significant ancestor.

As we approach Christmas this year, I wonder whether this may be a fruitful way to ponder the new life which God was ushering in with Jesus' birth. There are two long genealogies in the Gospels, one in Luke and the other in Matthew.

Throughout Advent this year we will hear excerpts from Luke's Gospel. Luke has a particular focus in the way he retells the nativity. For Luke it is important that Jesus' connection with God's work in David, the high point of sovereign kingship in his first people's story, is made clear. We see the family links to King David told and retold through the characters and genealogy Luke recalled.

In this sense Luke's record is much like our own concern. Jesus has a particular place in history, and he comes with an obvious significance as the fulfilment of what was envisaged in David's government.

However, Luke's account of Jesus' advent is not the only one we have, and it is Matthew's which always gets me thinking. If Luke's concerns when tracing Jesus' earthly heritage are much

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like ours, Matthew has a very important twist. He challenges the notion that being connected to important people from the past is key in Jesus' heritage as three significant, but surprising people are recognised in his retelling of Jesus' genealogy (in Matt 1). Luke's telling of Jesus' family tree does not include any women. Matthew's includes only three, but the three women who are included really should not be there...if we are to be concerned about importance and power.

Tamar, Ruth and Mary, Jesus' own mother, all stand out. As we go back to the circumstances of their lives as recorded in scripture we can see that they each demonstrated great strength, courage and moral authority in spite of great harm done to them (or the very vulnerable positions they lived in), however if one was going to write a document laying claim to a powerful ancestry they would not feature.

Indeed, their tenacity in the midst of powerplays by others stands out. A woman who had to claim her right (and be subjected to abuse) against conniving males (Tamar), a widow caught between a bitter mother-in-law and an uncertain



Bishop Matt Brain

future (Ruth), and a very young woman trusting that God would sustain her through the shame a harsh society would pour on her (Mary) are all recognised as being significant in God's work to bring Jesus to bear.

Through Tamar, Ruth and Mary the sense that we are fulfilled by attachment to the important and powerful is undone. Jesus was fulfilled by being enfolded in God's long plan for this world, which also included the significant participation of those who were not powerful.

If this is God's route into our history, I wonder what this means for our commemorations, celebrations, aspirations, and actions as we follow the child whose birth was peace and joy for those who saw him first?

Your servant in Christ,

Matt



Anglicans from Solomon Islands:
Timothy, Mostyn and Peter

PALM Workers Pop Up Church

Val Barker-Pigott

It was a hot afternoon in February 2024 when I attended the arrival briefing for 49 men and women from Vanuatu. They had come to work in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme. Shaking in my boots and trying to hide it from them I introduced myself, explaining that my role was to help them stay connected to their Christian faith whatever denomination they attended in their home country.

Shortly after I met 47 men from the Solomon Islands. When I explained my role to them there were shouts of “we have one God, this is good.” I was immediately introduced to Peter, their nominated prayer leader, an Anglican from St Andrew’s in Malaita Province, Solomon Islands.

The outcome of these meetings was a ‘Pop-up Church’ in Robinvale. We started at St Peter’s, but as soon as the cold weather hit other arrangements had to be made, and so we moved to the caravan park where they were staying.

Twice a week I would travel down. Wednesday late afternoon was for pastoral care, especially for the women, but the Solomon men did not want to

be left out and so there was ministry and prayer every week.

The Parish of Sunraysia South provided two guitars for the congregation to share. Every week the men would lead the worship with their singing. Solomon Islanders and Ni-Vans (those from Vanuatu) together with the five of us from Red Cliffs, all united through Jesus.

I would minister the Word, celebrate Communion and bless those who wanted blessing. The year went fast. We laughed together, cried together, prayed together, sang together, and worshipped our Lord together as one family.

Throughout the year we saw people come back to God in their faith. We saw healing both in Robinvale and in their homeland because of our joint ministry. We saw relationships reconciled. We also walked with people in their sadness when a family member had passed away in their homeland and they could not be with them.

When the day came for their departure I went to bless the workers from Vanuatu. I had no idea what I was going to do or how but I trusted the Lord. I wandered the park saying goodbye to people. We ended up at the front waiting for the bus.

Unexpectedly the Solomon men joined us. They had come as a surprise to sing to the Ni-Vans. In turn the Ni-Vans sang back, both singing songs of praise to God. Over 100 people stood in a circle holding hands. This included bosses, long term workers and some locals who had come to say farewell. I blessed the Ni-Vans as they boarded the bus.

I was told later that this had never happened before. This year is the first year that the Solomon Islanders have conversed with the Ni-Vans. Workers have said that this was a direct result of the ‘Pop-up Church.’ When we shared the peace at the start of our ministry in St. Peter’s, that is when they started talking to each other and sharing the bus together to come to church.

We, the team that go down weekly, are so excited about this. It is a direct result of the Spirit and our ministry. What’s more, the workers told their bosses that this year had been the best because of Jesus.

I have seen men rise up in their spiritual gifting and walk with the Lord this year. Our prayer is that they return to their home churches and bless them with their presence, until they return to us again next year. The Holy Spirit will not be limited when we choose to walk with Him.



Dean Elizabeth Dyke and Katie Meadows at Life FM

16 Days of Healing Through Prayer

Darcy Vaughan

“**W**hen you see or hear or notice that something is not quite as it should be, do you ‘walk by on the other side’? Or do you say or do something to bring justice and mercy into the situation? We can each of us make a difference, one instance at a time, for one person at a time.”

So begins Day 4 of the Prayer Diary for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. In Australia 1 in 4 women experience domestic violence and 1 in 15 men. Globally, almost 1 in 3 women experience physical and/or sexual abuse in their lifetime. The 16 Days of Activism is an opportunity to revitalise commitments to change and to call for accountability and action from decision-makers.

The Anglican Diocese of Bendigo in partnership with Mothers Union are supporting churches and individuals to participate in this vital movement. Dean Elizabeth Dyke has prepared a Prayer Diary with a reflection and prayer for each of the 16 days. This wonderful resource is available from the Diocesan website. Dean Elizabeth also visited Bendigo radio station Life FM to record these daily devotions to be aired on each of the 16 days.

On Tuesday 26 November a domestic and family violence Healing and Wholeness Service was held at St Paul’s Cathedral. The Rev’d Suzannah Daniels led a time of prayerful reflection as the names were read aloud of the sixty-six women who have been killed in Australia this year due to domestic violence. (Since the time of the service this number has now increased to seventy one). The congregation were invited to come forward and place a carnation at the foot of the cross in prayerful recognition of each of the women and the friends, families and communities impacted.

The Rev’d Lauren Lockwood-Porter gave a moving sermon drawing from Jesus’ interaction with the Samaritan woman at the well. Those gathered were invited to consider Jesus’ interaction with this unnamed but fully drawn person as a model for the way the church ought to relate to victim-survivors of domestic violence.

Lauren emphasised how we encounter the ultimate example of what it means to be a man, a person and a leader in the example of care, compassion and allyship with women found in Jesus. “We too are called to be Christ-like” Lauren concluded “and in doing so, we are also to stand against Domestic and Family Violence and point to

a new way of being, a way of love, but also of accountability and of speaking truth to power.”

The service concluded with an invitation to move toward healing led by Revd Roger Rich and the Healing and Wholeness Service worship band.

There is still time to participate in the 16 Days of Activism for 2024. The Anglican Diocese of Bendigo webpage has a range of excellent resources available including bible studies, sermons and intercessions.

Resources are also available from the national Anglican program for preventing family violence at www.tencommitments.org.au. And online from the Mothers’ Union ‘Respond, Inform, Support, Empower, Unite and Pray (RISE UP) campaign.

Churches across the Diocese can join together in praying from the Prayer Diary for the 16 Days of Activism: “Lord of heaven and earth, we pray for all to follow Christ’s example of treating women with equality and respect. We pray for the dawn of a better world where justice and peace may flourish. Amen.”

If you require immediate DFV support please contact 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732), available 24/7.

Stories of Hope

Darcy Vaughan

My new job title the 'Diocesan Storyteller' brings to mind a wizened wizard with a big old book and a pointy hat, telling ancient tales of a distant land. Sadly I have not as yet been issued my pointy hat.

It is a funny job title, and yet, there's something to it. Because stories are powerful. Our love of story draws us to books, television and music. We want to be taken on a journey, to see the world from a different perspective, and to return changed in some meaningful way.

It comes as no surprise, then, that God is the first and foremost storyteller. When we open our Bibles we find a story that starts "in the beginning". There are many twists and turns in what follows, but the story's climax comes in the person of Jesus, his death and resurrection. Each of us has been invited into this story of God's redeeming love. It is the great and ultimate story, and it has become our story, as we live in it, and share it with our words and actions.

As part of my new role, in the lead up to Hope25 I will be making some short videos. These two minutes clips will aim to capture the stories of some of the people in our Diocese; the challenges they have faced, and the ways Jesus has brought and is bringing them hope. These videos will be available for churches to use and for individuals to share online. I look forward to helping our Diocese share the story we have been given of God's love to a world in desperate need of hope.



The Sacred Heart Choir practising with St Paul's Choirmaster, Rohan Phillips. Photo: Paul Taylor.

The Beauty and Harmony of Holiness

Angela Lorrigan

The beauty and harmony of holiness were evident at St Paul's Evensong on Sunday 27 October as our choir and organist combined with those of Sacred Heart Catholic Cathedral to provide us with beautiful music.

Against the background of a troubled world we experienced a time of precious reflection as we offered prayers for peace.

From a historical perspective, this service was a remarkable thing. Less than a fortnight previously, the Anglican Church had remembered the deaths of Latimer and Ridley in 1555, a dreadful reminder of the violence that took place on both sides during the time of the Reformation in England.

Yet there we were on a beautiful Spring evening on the other side of the world, the descendants of that

conflict, worshipping, praying and singing together in harmony.

When we are tempted to think that peace will never happen and that warring factions will never live again in harmony, it is worth remembering the healing that has happened since those times and to pray and work for peace in hope.

Evensong is a very Anglican service, but it is derived from the Catholic services of Vespers and Compline. These days it has become known as a service which appeals to those who are seeking a time of peaceful reflection accompanied by beautiful choral music.

Evensong is held at St Paul's Cathedral, Bendigo on the 4th Sunday of every month at 6.00pm (except December and January) and at Christ Church, Castlemaine on the first Sunday of every month at 6.00pm.

The Enlivening of Bendigo North

Hannah Gregory

Our Parish Action Plan for this year and next is to consider our properties and buildings to determine how we might maximise the potential for each parish space.

At St Luke's in White Hills we started with the entry foyer. We made it brighter by removing a tree blocking the window, organising the shelving to create a discipleship library and decluttering the displays. It now holds a prayer request box, our name badges and a smiling welcomer each Sunday morning. Inside the church itself, we created a friendly children's area with toys and crafts for the days when we don't have Sunday School.

At St Clements in Huntly, the outside of our building was needing a facelift. We have painted the soffits and facias, doors,

downpipes and handrails and repaired the guttering. The Community Garden was hardly used 'post-COVID', so that has had a clean-up and with Huntly Community Church's help, we put up a new fence at the rear. A vestry that was being used for storage has been emptied and converted into a lounge space for prayer groups, quiet conversations or just a place to hang out.

Why did we go to all this effort? We need to be good custodians of our buildings so that they will serve us both now and in the future. But not only that – we want to be mission ready. From St Clements in 2025 we are opening a community 'drop-in and chat' ministry to tackle community isolation. And as part of Hope 25 we will open our new 'Hope Community Playgroup'. At St Luke's, we are listening to find out where God will lead us in 2025.



ChoiceVoices Choir

Fun at St Mary's Fair

Geoff Young

It was a pleasure to welcome the many people who flocked to St Mary's Anglican Church in Kangaroo Flat on Saturday 26 October 2024 for our annual Parish Fair. A packed program, wonderful weather and over 30 stalls ensured that there was something for everyone!

The Community Concert is a special feature of the St Mary's Fair. This year was no exception. Our sincere thanks to the Bendigo District Concert Band, the Marist Brass Band, ChoiceVoices Choir and the Bendigo Youth Choir for their wonderful performances.

There were all the usual Parish stalls offering morning tea, baked goods, plants, crafts, preserves and of course the BBQ. There was also the fun of a spinning wheel with vouchers and gifts donated by many local traders. Another popular stall gave people the chance to purchase a 'mystery bottle bag' which might contain anything from a bottle of wine to a bottle of tomato sauce!

Grateful thanks must go to the many local businesses and organisations who provided generous donations of vouchers and other items used as prizes, or who contributed in other ways. Sincere thanks to all who made the day so successful.



The original St Peter's, Robinvale



Memorial Windows



St Peter's, Robinvale



The congregation for the 100th celebration service

Robinvale turns 100!

Joe Varghese

On 23 October 2024 the town of Robinvale turned 100! A few days later Anglicans and friends from Wentworth, Dareton, Red Cliffs and Mildura all gathered for a time of worship at St Peter's Anglican Church, Robinvale.

The congregation that built St Peter's began meeting before 1924 in the parlour of the 'The Cliffs' homestead, owned by the Cuttle family. Herbert Cuttle Senior auctioned a square mile of freehold land on 23 October 1924 which became Robinvale township. Robinvale was named after Herbert's son Lieutenant George Robin Cuttle, who had served in the Royal Flying Corps and was shot down over France during World War I. Herbert set aside building blocks as gifts for the main Christian denominations to build churches.

By 1962, a bigger Church of England building was needed. The Rev'd Max Hazel along with Milton Whiting and Bill McGinty

were elected to organise the building project and a new St Peter's was built. On completion of the church the builder, Graham Thompson, discovered that there was a great view from the new bell tower!

The memorial windows pictured were first dedicated on 3 October 1926 by Bishop M.C. James (the first Bishop of St Arnaud) at the opening of Holy Trinity, Church of England, Ultima. These stained-glass windows were relocated, with the assistance of the descendants of the Cuttle family and friends, to St Peter's Anglican Church, Robinvale, and on 8 February 2009 were dedicated by Bishop Andrew Curnow (the then Bishop of Bendigo).

The Parish currently boasts no less than three Orders of Australia amongst its parishioners: Reg McGinty for Council and Community service, Mary Merlin for Aboriginal and Preschool service and Shirley Irving for School and Hospital service.

Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infant Loss Remembrance Services

Lauren Lockwood-Porter

The 15th of October was International Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance Day. It is a time to reflect on and acknowledge losses that have gone (and sadly often continue to go) unacknowledged. Faye Lougoon, a parishioner of St. Peter's Eaglehawk, approached Dale Barclay and I about holding a remembrance service.

In Australia 1 in 4 pregnancies end in miscarriage. And while there is an increasing awareness of the need to mourn and remember those little ones who passed too soon, there are still many people who have experienced historic losses which were never recognised and have never been spoken about.

The remembrance service creates a safe space for anyone whose life has been impacted by miscarriage, stillbirth and infant loss to come together to reflect, grieve and remember the ongoing love they have for their babies, and to be comforted by the God who suffers with us.

It can be challenging to know what to say or how to respond in the face of such heartache, but remaining silent can also bring its own pain. We found the 'Service for an Infant who has died near the time of birth' from *A Prayer Book for Australia* to be a very helpful resource. The service is incredibly thoughtful, gentle and sensitive, removing the fear of unintentionally resorting to unhelpful clichés.

We also created a time of 'active reflection' for people to move through three different areas; at first picking up a rock, then moving to place it at the foot of the cross and lighting a candle, and then finishing by taking a felted coloured heart. Those present at the service were encouraged to move through the stations at their own pace and in the order that made most sense for them.

In a neighbouring parish Hannah Gregory held a similar service at St. Clement's, Huntly. She reflected; "we had a small and intimate service where we were able to reflect on our experiences and feelings and bring them before Christ. One person said afterwards that it was so important for us to hold this space for people like him who have nowhere else to talk about these issues, and could we make sure we do it again next year."

If this perspective resonates with you, or perhaps speaks to the experiences of members of your congregation or community, I encourage you to think about holding your own service in October next year. If you'd like some help with resources please do get in touch.

If this is an experience that has touched your life and you'd like professional support please have a look at the following:

- *Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Newborn Death Support* at www.sands.org.au or contact their bereavement telephone line on 1300 308 307.
- *Red Nose Grief and Loss* at www.rednosegriefandloss.org.au.



Felted colour hearts

It can be challenging to know what to say or how to respond in the face of such heartache, but remaining silent can also bring its own pain.



Prayer at Holy Trinity, Rochester

Praying for Revival

Samuel Kelly

In November a group of 18 people from local churches gathered at Holy Trinity, Rochester to pray for revival.

We prayed for our churches, congregations and their leaders. We prayed for the youth of the town, for those who are still in 'survival mode' after the floods, and for all who are weary and heavy burdened in Rochester. We prayed that they would hear and respond to the Gospel, accept the open invitation of Christ, and find their rest in Jesus.

It was wonderful to pray alongside the ministers and parishioners from the different churches of Rochester. We prayed that we would not be divided into individual churches, but that we would work together as one.

Having lived in 'survival mode' for so long, it is easy to lose sight of the mission of the Church. However as we left the meeting we all had the same verse fresh in our minds, ready for ministry in Rochester and beyond: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."



Gamers going head to head

Playing Games

Julie Worrall

Christ Church, Swan Hill held their first Tabletop Games Day on Sunday 10 December – a new monthly gathering for those who want to play board, role playing and tabletop games. We had a mixture of new attractions like Flashpoint, Azul and Cat Bingo mixed with more traditional Canasta, SkipBo and Sequence.

We are offering the afternoon as a free event with cans of drink, chocolates and chips on sale (just to cover costs). We hope to encourage families and young adults interested in gaming to come along and use the space. A good time was had by all and there was plenty of interest for the concept to expand in the new year with a new Facebook page and some local advertising.



Canon Shannon

Dharrangdharrang Messagestick

Throughout the year we have developed several ministries out of St Mark's, Golden Square. The Aboriginal Ministry has taken me out of the Parish and across to Robinvale, on Tati Tati Country, to sit and listen to the local Elders. I have been called back to Wiradjuri country twice to baptise babies, which has been a highlight of the year.

Our Korean congregation continue to grow in spirit as they settle into their new home at St Mark's. Holy Communion is celebrated on the 1st Sunday of the month, and it has been not only a pleasure but

also an honour to be invited to celebrate with our brothers and sisters. The Korean congregation host an evening meal after their services. This creates the opportunity for wonderful fellowship among those who have gathered for the evening.

Our team has shown some remarkable support to folks who have found themselves in need of a little extra love and guidance this year. All the saints of St Mark's continue to be pillars of strength and encouragement, taking up their crosses and continuing their Christian journey both in and beyond the church.



Fellowship at St Mark's Golden Square

Youth and Families

As this issue of The Spirit comes out, we are into the season of Advent and the countdown to Christmas has begun. Advent simply means ‘coming’ and 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.

Waiting is hard, and waiting for Christmas Day can be especially hard! On this page are a few activities to help fill in the time while you count down the sleeps to Christmas Day.



**Archdeacon
George**

A Christmas Prayer ADVENTure

Every family has a different tradition about when they put up the Christmas tree and how they decorate it. Whether you have your tree up already, or are still holding out, why not try this idea for turning decorations into acts of devotion?

- Buy some gift tags (or better yet make some by cutting up old Christmas cards).
- Write on the plain side the name of someone you want to pray for. It could be family members, friends, or those you know who are sad, ill, lonely, worried or in need of God’s peace.
- As you hang each on the tree (either all at once, or one day at a time) pray that they might know the peace, love, joy, and hope that Christ came to bring.

Nummy Nativity

Along with mince pies and Christmas pudding, gingerbread is one of those foods that is often associated with Christmas. People used to decorate their Christmas trees with gingerbread creations but that seems like such a waste! For those with some time to spare, make gingerbread people to give as gifts, or just as a (pre)-Christmas snack. Or if you’re feeling really game, rather than making a normal, boring old gingerbread house, why not have a go at making a gingerbread nativity scene?

Spot Santa St Nicholas?

Did you know that Santa Claus is based on a real person – Saint Nicholas. Nicholas was Bishop of Myra (a region in modern day Turkey). There are lots of stories and legends about Nicholas, particularly around his care for children and the poor. Nicholas is said to have given gifts to those in need, often in secret, but above all he pointed people to the greatest gift of all – Jesus.

Hidden on every double page of this issue of the Spirit is a St. Nicholas – can you find them all?





Editor's Notes

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Contributions are welcome, and will be edited. Email contributions are preferred. Anonymous articles will not be considered for publication.

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



Sheepy Goes to Sydney

Sheepy is the mascot for our Safe Church Box. This box is filled with activities, books and resources to help empower children in our churches to understand what is safe and not safe as part of the Child Safe Standards.

Recently Sheepy and our Registrar Sarah were invited to go to Sydney to meet with the Anglican Safe Ministry Commission. The Commission had heard about the Safe Church Box initiative and were keen to see the resource in person so it can be shared with other dioceses and churches across the Anglican Church in Australia. Sheepy made sure to get a photo with the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge and Opera House!

Stay tuned for an update of Sheepy's book 'Sheepy Goes to Church' and more adventures for Sheepy as we continue building tools to ensure a safe church for all.

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