

Yarra Yarns

"The Annunciation"

Yarralumla Uniting Church

Vol. 4, No. 5

Dec 05 – Jan 06

Pat's Chat

BITS & PIECES

* My lovely mother-in-law, Merle Gibson, passed away on 22 October, in Brisbane. She was 87 years old. She was not only my mother-in-law, she was also a very special lady and had been part of my life for 43 years. Even when Grahame and I separated then divorced she never faltered in her love and friendship for me. Louise and I were able to see her a few weeks before she died and at that stage she was having morphine for the pain in her chest. I was able to sit beside her bed and pray while she slept.

At her funeral I met many of her friends, and one in particular told me that she had tried to get Mum to go to the local Baptist Church with her and had managed to do so a few times. While visiting Mum in hospital this friend asked Mum if she would like her to pray aloud for her. I think Mum's reply was something like "I have done too many bad things in my life." Mum's friend did pray for and with Mum, and apparently she had a peaceful sleep afterwards. I thought I knew Mum very well so it was a shock to hear this. Since then I have done some soul searching and have come to realise more than ever that my relationship with God must not falter and I know that even though I will stumble and fail at times, God's love for me will remain steadfast and strong.

Mum always knew when I was feeling low and I could tell by her voice when she was down, so we would send each other "a hug" over the phone. By the time we said "Goodbye" we would both be laughing and joking.

* * * * *

* Last Sunday morning (November 13) I rode in the "Tour de Femme" and actually bettered my time by around 14 minutes so felt rather pleased with myself. There were 570 women/girls riding. In fact it is the biggest women's cycling race in Australia and is held about this time each year in Canberra. (I might add that the winner, Oenone Wood, took 32 minutes to ride the 20km.) I took just over 1 hour so it looks as if I will have to step up my training and upgrade my bike to make a better time next year!

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* My thoughts and prayers are with the members of our congregation who are on the sick list, in hospital, having tests, grieving for a loved one or feeling sad and lonely at this time.

* * * * *

* May God bless you and your families as you prepare to celebrate Christ's birth. I hope and pray that 2006 will bring you and your loved ones good health, happiness and many blessings.

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HEBREWS 13:6: "Let us be bold, then and say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

*Pat Thom
Pastoral Care*

Preparation: It was not suddenly and unannounced that Jesus came into the world. He came into a world that had been prepared for him. The whole Old Testament is the story of a special preparation... Only when all was ready, only in the fullness of his time, did Jesus come. *Christianity Today 2003.*

The happiness of beauty

Though the emerald greenness is fading, Canberra has been for the last two or three months a startlingly beautiful place. When running, driving around or just looking out through the windows, it was as if one could get lost in the beauty of it all. And during all this time I was conscious of the enormous influence this beauty has on our happiness.

The Welsh poet, Edward Thomas, understood this and expressed something of his longing to dwell in this beauty in a poem titled “The Glory”. It begins like this:

*The glory of the beauty of the morning –
the cuckoo crying over the untouched dew;
the blackbird has found it, and the dove
that tempts me on to something sweeter
than love;*

*The glory invites me, yet it leaves me scorning
all I can ever do, all I can be,
beside the lovely motion, shape and hue,
the happiness I fancy fit to dwell
in beauty's presence.*

The poem expresses something of our longing to become part of this beauty. Not to only see the greenness of Spring, not to only appreciate the beauty of the flowers, but to allow this beauty to transform our thinking – yes, our whole life. In short, to allow this beauty to inspire happiness.

In the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament, the refrain in Genesis 1 “*And God saw that it was good*”, the Greek word *kala* is used for “good”. However, *kala* can also be translated as “beautiful”. And God saw that it was beautiful.

This beauty and goodness is part of our world, it permeates everything. However, we know that goodness and beauty are not the only realities of this world. In

Victor Frankl’s account of his survival of the holocaust, he says that as the inner life of a prisoner tended to become more intense, he also experienced the beauty of art and nature as never before. He recalls an incident where one evening a fellow prisoner rushed in and called them to look at the wonderful sunset. Outside they watched in awe as the whole sky was alive with clouds of ever-changing shapes and colours, from steel blue to blood red. The desolate grey mud huts provided a sharp contrast, while the puddles on the muddy ground reflected the glowing sky. Then after minutes of moving silence, one prisoner said: “How beautiful the world *could* be!”

Beauty allows us to see and grasp, not only what *could have been*, but also what *can be*. Beauty is the perpetual reminder that things can be different. Beauty introduces us to the happiness of knowing that what we see around us is not the final verdict on humanity.

The happiest memories I have from my childhood are those of the extended family around the Christmas tree, singing Christmas music. Hearing this music many years later, revelling in the beauty of it, not only awakens memories, but also creates new ones.

The beauty of Handel’s *Messiah* or Bach’s Christmas music beckons us to a world of goodwill and peace among people whom God favours.

Entering into this world is entering into the happiness of God’s reign.

Ockert Meyer

This then is salvation: When we marvel at the beauty of created things and praise their creator.

Meister Eckhart

Presbytery Report – November

The final Presbytery meeting for the year was held last week at Bega Uniting Church, where the 10th Assembly’s Resolution 84 on Ministry and Sexuality has been a major issue. Bega is the only church in the Presbytery to become a

congregational member of the Reforming Alliance. The agenda included a proposal on Resolution 84 by the Bega congregation for discussion at Assembly next year. Four congregations addressed the proposal: – Bega briefly in support,

Crookwell by letter of support, City Church against, and Weston Creek against. It was clear that in each case, arriving at a particular position on this issue has been divisive, painful and energy-sapping. However, the responses at the Presbytery meeting were notable for their temperate rationale, thoughtful arguments and reliance on fact and history. It was therefore very surprising when, after Weston Creek's response, Bega's minister interrupted proceedings and withdrew the motion.

Other matters dealt with included discussion of a candidate for ministry; the extension of the ministry placement of Kippax's Rev Gordon Ramsay (agreed); and the election of committees for 2006. Jean Thomson was re-elected to the Standing Committee, and Norm Schroeder and Alex Smith to the Finance and Residences Committees.

A workshop session with ministers from Indonesia and the Solomon Islands provided a very interesting break from the normal business, and we heard of the many challenges facing them. For example, Rev Cliff Bird spoke about the United Church of the Solomon Islands and told us the church had a membership of 50 000, led by just 46 ordained ministers.

On the subject of the minister shortage, the Moderator of the NSW Synod, Jim Mein, has appealed for further help for drought-affected congregations across NSW. He has asked that congregations prayerfully consider allowing their minister to spend some time, whether it be days or weeks, with a drought-affected congregation without a minister.

Missionary Development Worker Rev Wendy Snook reported on the upcoming "*Jesus. All* **"Cloud of Witnesses" banner display**

Thirty-four beautiful Banners will be on show at Yarralumla Church on Saturday and Sunday 10–11 December. (Two feature on our front cover.) UCAF National President, Joan Kelley, had the idea that creating a travelling exhibition could link all Uniting Church Adult Fellowships across Australia. Every Presbytery in Australia was invited to create a banner, and the Canberra Presbytery banner was created by Edith Buckley. The character was "Lydia" (see Acts 16), and pieces of purple fabric were provided by each of the parishes for this banner. The catalogue contains notes about all the biblical characters depicted, and the construction of each banner.

The banners have been on a tour of Australia and come to us from the NSW North Coast. After they have been on display in five places in the Canberra region they will be sent to Perth and all parts of Western Australia. Then they will be a special feature of the July 2006 National Assembly in Brisbane before being given back to their creators.

We hope you and your friends enjoy them and are inspired by the stories they tell.

about Life" media campaign. She said the plan is that congregations need to move towards the community once the campaign starts to spark people's interest. Congregations need to register, free, on jesusallaboutlife.org.au. They will then receive information, have enquirers referred to them, and be able to publicise church events and programs on the website. The ad campaign will run from February through to Holy Week, with a partial break during the Commonwealth Games. The campaign, developed by the Bible Society and supported by local churches, is aimed at three groups: youth, young families, and mid-lifers. Churches are encouraged to do follow-up programs such as *Alpha*, and help is needed to staff the call centre during the campaign. (The experience in Adelaide was that people who called and got an answering machine just hung up.) Training will be provided, so if you can spare even a few hours during the campaign period, please call Wendy at the Presbytery office.

Another important matter was the report from the Strategic Directions Task Group which had the job of discerning the priorities of the Presbytery. Gungahlin was identified in 2004 as being the Presbytery's top missional priority and it was satisfying to finally have a plan of action laid out. Gungahlin is about to lose all three members of its ministry team, so everything hinges on the work of the Nominating Committee in matching the plan of action to its search. I proposed an additional point to the plan, asking Presbytery to write to other denominations to find out what their situations are in Gungahlin, with a view to exploring any realistic avenues for cooperation. This was accepted.

Bronwyn Hendy, Presbytery Rep

Church Library

NEW . . . NEW . . . NEW . . . NEW

Have you checked out the library lately? In addition to all the “good stuff” already on the shelves, there are 4 new additions – two books, a VHS tape and a DVD.

Stripes of the Zebra (in DVD) is a powerful Open Doors movie portraying the stark reality of life as a Christian in Muslim Africa. It centres on a young Christian's journey back to God and his quest to take the message of salvation back to his village. Experience the unique difficulties believers in parts of Africa are facing because of their commitment to Christ, and their sheer guts in persevering, despite many obstacles. The movie is based on the real-life testimonies of Open Doors' contacts in Africa.

Let the Sea Resound (in VHS) is a stirring 79-minute documentary covering the astonishing revival that has swept through the nation of Fiji since the coup led by George Speight in May 2000. It is a moving and instructive testament of unprecedented Christian unity, contemporary signs and wonders, rapid church growth and genuine socio-political transformation. The breath of God has revived even the sea and the land.

An Angel in the Court, by Anne Henderson, tells of the life of Major Joyce Harmer. From humble beginnings in a small-town Salvation Army family to working as a court chaplain with a spare hanky in her pocket, giving comfort to some of Australia's most notorious criminals, including accused child killer Kathleen Folbigg, Joyce Harmer's life has been one of enormous contrasts. She battled an abusive childhood and post-natal depression, raised her own family in what were often trying circumstances, and turned obscure ministries into refuges for the needy. Armed with unshakeable faith, Joyce has helped some of society's least wanted: drug addicts, alcoholics, criminals of all descriptions – and their victims. This is the inspiring story of a quiet achiever whose “spiritual fragrance” has changed the lives of thousands of Australians.

Crucified in the Media is sub-titled “Finding the real Jesus amidst today's headlines” and is by Marvin and Sheryl Pate. It's well worth checking out.

Janice Newman

“The Messiah” by Handel

A performance of this great Oratorio was being given in the Cleckheaton Town Hall many years ago and old Cuthbert Briggs from Liversidge thought he might like to go. He tried to persuade his wife to go with him, but she wasn't too keen. “Nah, Cuthbert lad – you know it's not my line. Give me a bit of comedy or a singsong on the end of Blackpool Pier ... no, you go and tell me about it when you come home.” So Cuthbert went on his own. He had no idea what to expect. In fact he had never heard of “The Messiah”. It was just that he fancied doing something a bit different from his usual Saturday night visit to the Sun Inn.

When he got back home, Cuthbert's wife was all ears. “Come on then, tell me all about it.” “Oh well ...” began Cuthbert, “it were all right but not quite what I expected. There weren't a lot of movement on the stage. In fact there weren't a lot of room on the stage. It were full of singers. I'd been sitting there for a bit when in comes a load of fellas carrying fiddles. They brought in the biggest fiddle I've ever seen. It were that big they had to wheel it in on castors and a little chap rubbed its belly with a stick and you should have heard it groan. It sounded like a cow with croup. Well, the fiddles joined in and made such a racket.

“Then they settled down and it all went quiet. After about a minute in come the Messiah – well I think it were him because everyone clapped and all the fiddlers stood up to welcome him. He were a dapper of a bloke all dolled up in a white waistcoat with a red carnation in its buttonhole. I'm sure it must have been the Messiah. Then he picked up a little stick and started waving it at everyone on the stage. They were all staring at him wondering what were up. Then they started to sing.

“They'd not been going long before they were arguing. They all wanted to know who were the King of Glory. First one side said HE is the King of Glory and then the other side said HE is the

King of Glory and then they went at it hammer and tongs but it fizzled out in the end. Then there were a right to-do about some sheep that had gone astray. Some of the singers must be a bit partial to a bit of mutton because they kept singing ‘O we like sheep’. Personally I like a bit of well-done steak, but never mind. Well, I think that them lost sheep must have belonged to one of the singers because he stood up and said that every mountain and hill should be laid low. I thought ‘Good – if they flatten all the mountains they'll be sure to find the sheep that were gone astray.’

“Then the organist started up and the band joined in and by gum, they seemed to be getting mad over something. The way they were sawing at them fiddles I was expecting them to fall apart. Then after that all the women stood up to sing. Believe me some of them were a bit past it, by looking at them they must have been 70 if they were a day and they sang ‘Unto us a child is born’ and all the fellas shouted ‘Wonderful!’ I thought ‘It's a blooming miracle.’

“Then they all composed themselves a bit and sang about a woman called Joyce Greatly. I'd never heard of her but apparently she's a daughter of Zion, whoever he is. Oh well, I were getting a bit fed up by now ‘cause I'd been sitting there for nearly 2 hours when all of a sudden I got cramp in my leg. I jumped up out of my seat and what do you know? Everybody else jumped up at the same time. They must had all had cramp same as me. Then the choir shouted ‘Hallelujah it's going to rain for ever and ever.’ Well I never thought to bring my brolly so I thought I'd better get off home before it started. So seeing as how I were on my feet I reckoned I'd had my money's worth. It was different but I do hope they find them lost sheep.”

[Just for fun – The Editor]

Breakfast

Something wonderful happened the last Saturday in October – the first “Women’s Breakfast” was held at the Church centre.

About forty women from our church family enjoyed a lovely healthy breakfast, then listened to Jenny Stephens speak about her experiences at Taizé in France. She had spent a week there a few years ago with a group of Anglican friends, and found it a profound and uplifting time. The silences, the simplicity of living, and service with hundreds of others from around the world made a major impact on her life. She was devastated to hear that Brother Roger, who founded the centre as a refuge just after WWII, had been murdered recently.

Jenny’s word to us was that it is important for everyone to “take time out”, be quiet, and listen to God.

The Breakfast was a great idea, and we look forward to the next one. Thanks to Lynne, Elizabeth and helpers.

Jean Thomson

Advent and Christmas at Yarralumla

Sunday 27 November 9am
1st Sunday in Advent

Sunday 4 December 9am
2nd Sunday in Advent

“Cloud of Witnesses” banner display
Sat 10 Dec 9am – 5 pm
Sun 11 Dec 12 noon – 5pm

Sunday 11 December 9am
3rd Sunday in Advent – Youth Service

Sunday 18 December 9am
4th Sunday in Advent
Special Christmas Music

Saturday 24 December 5.30pm
Carols on the lawns

Sunday 25 December 9am
Christmas Day — Family worship

The Garage Sale

After a lot of advertising, cajoling, collecting, carrying, selling, tidying up, and aching muscles, it was agreed that the garage sale was a success. Over \$9000 was raised, but apart from that great result, there were some interesting stories. Tony worked with the “Big Items”, and he writes:

You may have heard that mid morning a pleasant young passer-by stopped and offered to help with carrying things to peoples’ cars and anything else that would be helpful. If there is one thing that this church is not strong in, it is a good supply of fit, healthy and willing young bodies. So before Chunyu knew what was happening, Alex had an official yellow apron on him and he worked like a slave for the rest of the day! For quite a bit of the afternoon he helped me with deliveries.

One late purchase comprised a six-foot lounge. The buyer protested a little at the \$10 delivery charge saying that it was only “around the corner”. Well, it was within Yarralumla, but by the time Chunyu and I had carried it end on up four flights of stairs to the second floor we felt that we had truly earned our \$10.

That well-presented two-door frig had to be delivered to Red Hill. We were met by a wife and young children when we arrived at the house. They had just moved in that day after coming from the UK. The frig was resplendent as the only piece of furniture in the house!

And then there was the lady who knew that she would need to be early or the best bargains would be gone but she never anticipated spending more than \$20 or so. Well at our garage sales that is a hard ask. Late in the piece she asked about a little table marked at \$15. Could she have it for \$8 - that was all she had left? “Look, I will give you everything that I have in my purse including the two stamps!” We let her keep her stamps.

Lynne also has experiences from garage sales.

Yes, the 2005 Yarralumla garage sale has come and gone. Once again it was a huge community event for both our church and the wider community. We all worked together and achieved great things. As Ockert remarked in Church the next day, there might be a bit of a dip in the retail market but there wasn’t one for our garage sale. Most of our homes probably both gained and lost things and the amount raised by our efforts is somewhat wondrous.

As I look around my home I have a collection of precious items that have come from the garage sales. There is one of Lorna’s bowls on the dresser that I enjoy to look at as it has just the right colours for the room and it also reminds me of Norm and Lorna. Then every year as the Midwinter Arts and Crafts Show approaches there are the cake tins that get used to make the almond bread. When I am cutting up meat I usually put it on a plate that came from a garage sale. And last but not least there is my bedroom chair which Rohan stripped back, resurfaced and gave to me for Christmas.

I have recently read a book about “conscious style” which suggests that we can create stylish environments in which to live at the same time as making environmentally sound choices about how we live. Our garage sale is surely a great example of this as goods that others don’t want or no longer need find new homes and uses.

Christmas Bowl

Congratulations and best wishes . . .

Wedding Bells will be ringing for Sue Woodland and Alan Gregory at the lovely outdoor Chapel at Greenhills on 17 December. All of us will be celebrating with them the next afternoon in the Church hall.

Rory Mackenzie, son of Ros and Grant, grandson of Aubrey and Janice Newman, was baptised recently at Yarralumla.

Susan Coles and Daniel Fitzpatrick have a son Lachlan, brother to Madelaine.

Caroline Hendy has passed her music exams with flying colours, and Bronwyn tells me that Patrick is excellent at sight-reading too.

William Thomson received a “Good Kid” award from the *Good Guys* in Tugger-anong. He was nominated for his contribution to the Catch-Up program every Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons during the year, by helping to organise games for the other kids.

Rohan Thomson was runner-up in the National Botanic Gardens photographic competition, College b/w section.

June Hicks and the whole congregation ran a very successful Garage Sale recently. June also stepped in to help organise a large catering job when key members of the Fellowship were away.



Ralph and Margaret Lawton attended the wedding of their eldest grand-daughter Nari last week.

We will follow the Sydney-Hobart Yacht Race with special interest this year, as Jim Buchanan will be on *Namadji*.

Do you like licorice? (It’s one of Ralph’s favourite things!) Did you know that there is a licorice factory at Junee? Wendy Wingett (plus friends) visited it recently.

. . . and from the tropics

According to John and Ngaire Short, Townsville is a place . . .

* where it can rain, with falls of 200 mm in a couple of days not uncommon

* where cane toads reign supreme – could it be that they are included in the song “All things bright and beautiful”?

* in North Queensland where the ranks of the Uniting Church have been deci-mated following “Resolution 84”. At Kirwan, over 200 members, including all the leaders, followed the minister away, after spending more than all the available money.

* where it is legitimate to have a siesta

* where we meet mostly wonderful, ordinary people

* where on rugby league grand final day, a supporter did a circuit of the church with the local flag held high before the service commenced

* where the word “winter” is meaningless

* where during a recent service on “forgiveness” a member of the congregation had his necktie cut in half with a very sharp pair of scissors!

(A tie in tropical Townsville? Ed.)

Advent – a time to prepare

What if you were given eight hours to chop down an enormous tree? If you're like most people, you probably would grab your axe and swing furiously with all your might for eight hours straight. Abraham Lincoln said he would do something different. He said, "If I had eight hours to chop down a tree, I'd spend six of the eight hours sharpening my axe."

A dull axe demands much strength; a sharp axe saves strength. Lincoln was not referring merely to axes and trees, however, but to preparation in every area of life.

Advent is our axe-sharpening time, a time to pray, meditate, and prepare for the commemoration of the greatest event in the history of the world. "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight."

From Sermon Illustration Sourcebank Series III

(UCA logo)

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WORSHIP SERVICE

Sundays 9:00 am

Sunday Club

Sundays 9:00 am

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