



# THE new vine

## UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA

Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)

Articles or queries may be emailed to: Rev Graham Dempster,  
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Issue No. 8, Spring 2018



### EDITORIAL COMMENT

As I sit at my computer preparing this edition, the political world is swirling around us with leadership challenge activity. Such events are terrible times for everyone – those involved, their families and colleagues, people who are part of the political structures around the country, and voters in the electorates.

Such events engender a range of emotions in people – those within the political sphere to those with no concern for politics at all. Reactions can be so varied – from a visceral, gut reaction; to an ideological response; to simply one of disinterest that simply asks – “Why don’t they just do what we sent them to Canberra to do – govern the country?”

As Christians, we probably have nearly as many different ways of responding as the wider community, which is not surprising really. But would there be value, for us, at such times, to try a little self-examination that queries the basis for our responses and feelings. Why have we taken the position we have? What is the real source of our response?

As mere mortals, I guess we all carry prejudices of one sort or another and certainly, in my case, they influence my responses on many occasions. I sense these prejudices grow out of some form of inherent ideological views formed over years and they are often applied instinctively, without much thought. And I am convinced they really need challenging if I am to be true to my commitment to walk the Christian way with Jesus.

On the occasions I do this, I find the result is often confusion and I see no clear path forward. I am sometimes pulled up with a jerk and astonishment at just how far I have strayed from what Jesus might demand of me – but my sense is that I need to do it. For me, it is a useful exercise.

So, in such situations, I try to ask myself the following sorts of questions:

Does my response reflect Christian values?

How might I respond in a way that reflects justice, compassion and love?

Can I respond in a way that cares for the individuals involved and also for the greater good?

How do I conduct myself so as not to pass judgement and still find a way of acceptance?

How do I maintain the necessary balances between – annoyance / encouragement; care for the political system / care for the nation; disappointment and despair and hope for the future; etc?

I try to do this more and more as I age – some may say as I mature – but that’s where I find myself and I’m conscious I will need to do it quite a bit in the near future as we may soon have to vote; continue to discuss Same Gender Marriage; become involved in celebration of the end of the Great War; are exposed to the fervour of football finals; as we continue to reflect upon who we are as the people of God on the Blackall Range – the list is almost endless.

Whatever our views on all these things, may we find strength and purpose as we follow Jesus along the way. May our reflections and actions shine more light and support new life.

Peace and blessings  
Graham

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## WHO'S WHO IN THE BLACKALL RANGE CHURCHES

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**Joint Management Committee:** Rev Catherine Solomon (Chair), John Benn, Peter Callaghan, John Daniells, Duncan Drew, Naua Lolohea, Pastor Kay Nixon, Karis Ross, Roger Smith, Rev George Woodward

**Maleny Church Council:** Rev. Catherine Solomon, Peter Callaghan [Chair], Murray Robertson, John Benn, Marilyn Milton [Secretary], Bob Eather, Peter Uhlmann, Amity Green and Lynn Ross.  
Minute Secretary: Sue Callaghan

**Maleny Congregational Meetings:** Peter Callaghan (Chair), Karl Tietze (Secretary)

**Palmwoods Mission Council:** Rev Catherine Solomon (Chair), Mele Cameron, Greg Harriman, Naua Lolohea, Siale Lolohea, Pastor Kay Nixon, Cynthia Zaverdinos (Secretary),

**Retired Ministers:** Rev Graham Dempster, Rev Bob Philpot, Rev Ron Potter, Rev Brian Richards, Rev George Woodward.

## O'CATHERINE SAYS

There is change in the air! On the Sunday this edition of the New Vine is published, the announcement will be made that I am moving onto a new placement in January 2019. This has not been an easy decision. Both Andrew and I have enjoyed immersing ourselves in the communities in which I minister. There is great sadness in knowing that we have to say goodbye to such a wonderful cluster of people devoted to seeking and following Christ. There is, however, a sense of anticipation as God prepares us for this new season.

Our congregations will have to begin a process of creating a profile of who we are for Christ within our context. It's a great opportunity to reflect where we have grown these past four years while visioning and praying for our future in who God is calling us to be and who will lead us into this next season. There is change in the air for all of us. Many of us are also going through personal changes and we can easily become fearful of the unknown future.

In Googling 'change' I found hundreds of quotes:

*"Don't be afraid to change. You may lose something good but you may gain something better."*

*"Change is hard at first, messy in the middle and gorgeous at the end."*

Change can bring fear and our response can be to run away (flight), be overwhelmed (freeze) or get angry (fight). There is another perspective. When we trust God we need not fear change or the future. The living God is still creating and making all things new. God is love. In love there is no fear. There is a surrendering of our agendas, our pride and our comfort as we listen to God calling and leading us forward. Friends, as we finish the Sermon Series "The Jesus Diet" and enter this transition period, let us trust the eternal God and let us feed on Christ.

*"Those who leave everything in God's hand will eventually see God's hand in everything."*

Bless you all as followers of Christ, living abundantly in this new season of Spring.

[REV CATHERINE SOLOMON]



## THE new vine

### CHANGE OF FORMAT

Following a number of comments that *The New Vine* was too difficult to read on line, it was decided to try a new way of doing things this time round. We were also looking for ways to save on paper and the time and effort of those involved in copying and collating.

The result is that we have printed copies for everyone to take from the back of the churches. It is on A4, and not A3, paper making a considerable saving and there are no names and addresses on them – they are there for the taking by those who want them, making a significant time saving.

If you prefer to receive a copy by e-mail, please let us know and we will arrange for that to happen.

We would be interested to know what you think of the new arrangements so please make your views known and we'll see what we should do next time.

## ASSEMBLY DECISION PASTORAL LETTER

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I am writing to provide information on the recent Assembly decision to allow same gender marriage ceremonies within the Uniting Church, as well as to indicate where our congregations and councils currently stand on responding to this issue. There has been much discussion within our congregations, indeed across the whole church, and there are diverse responses. We are not alone in our struggle. As we listen to each other and begin to digest what this means for us personally, and for the church, may we continue to uphold the two greatest commandments to - love God and love our neighbour. May we seek the Holy Spirit in being gentle, patient and kind in our conversations and, as a listening church, prayerfully respect all views.

There are people within our congregations who are struggling and deeply troubled by the Assembly decision. Some feel the church has lost its way and is not holding fast to the Biblical truths and that the Gospel has been compromised. As a result, I have heard some of our brothers and sisters might not be able to continue to worship and fellowship within our church community. This saddens me deeply. In the same breath there are people within our congregations who are celebrating this Assembly decision from a theological and Gospel focussed response. I have heard stories where many have left the church silently over the years because they have felt excluded and shamed by their gender preference. This also saddens me deeply. There are people in our congregations who have family members who are gay (a number of whom have a faith in God) and are struggling to understand their position in this decision. There are also people in our congregations who genuinely feel confused and are working through the issue Biblically, theologically, from past experiences, through logic and reasoning and their relationships and conversations with others.

As there is much to digest, no congregation or council has made any decision at this point.

*As it stands the Blackall Range Uniting Church congregations are not currently available for the conduct of same gender marriage ceremonies.*

The decision made by Assembly in July 2018 can be summarised in three parts:

- a) All Ministers in the Uniting Church have the right to act according to their religious beliefs and refuse to conduct same gender marriages if they wish.
- b) Church Councils may decide whether same gender marriages are performed on property for which they are responsible.
- c) There are two statements that now exist for a minister to choose from:
  - (i) The existing statement of belief “*marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of a man and a woman to live together for life*” which has been retained. This has not been changed, amended or deleted.
  - (ii) The new statement is provided for ministers who in their good conscience marry people of the same gender “*marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of two people to live together for life.*”

Our Council members themselves reflect the diverse views and feelings of our congregations and so we are praying and waiting on the Holy Spirit to guide our next steps. We are all taking

time to digest this decision and I have encouraged the Councils to not rush into a quick decision, but to make an informed, intentional and prayerful decision when the time is best.

I want to provide a little background about the 18 weddings I have performed during the past three and a half years. Of the 18, only five have been held in our church buildings. Three of these couples (one couple from each congregation) were semi regular worshippers while the other two 'liked' the building. With fewer and fewer heterosexual couples choosing a minister to marry them (in 2015, 74% of marriages were conducted by celebrants), I perceive the possibility of a same gender couple wanting a religious minister to marry them in our Uniting Church buildings is very small. Also, since the Assembly announcement, no gay couple has approached me to conduct a marriage ceremony. I believe at this stage we don't need to rush into a decision to allow same gender marriages to occur within our Uniting Church buildings.

How do we digest this issue? We remain in Christ and Christ in us (John 6:56). We are united by Christ. As we did at the formation of the Uniting Church, may we focus on our similarities, those things that unite us, rather than our differences, the things that divide us. May we focus on our core beliefs of God revealed to us as Sovereign Creator, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. May we focus on the core mission before us - to reach out and share the gift of Jesus Christ's grace and love to those who don't know his truth; to go make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; and to teach them to obey everything Jesus has commanded. And let us do this in the confidence that Christ is with us always, to the very end (Matthew 28:19-20).

Please pray for our church. Pray for the people you sit next to on Sunday morning. Pray for those you meet up with during the week. Through the gift of the Spirit let us experience deeper unity with each other in worship, witness and service to God's eternal glory through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Peace be with you my Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Rev Catherine Solomon  
August 28th 2018



A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his sermon.

Four worms were placed into four separate jars.  
The first worm was put into a container of alcohol.  
The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke.  
The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup.  
The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the Minister reported the following results:  
The first worm in alcohol . . . Dead.  
The second worm in cigarette smoke . . . Dead.  
Third worm in chocolate syrup . . . Dead.  
Fourth worm in good clean soil . . . **Alive.**

So the Minister asked the congregation, "What did you learn from this demonstration?"

Soon the answer came from the back of the church.  
"As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!"

## CONNECT GROUPS AT MALENY



A Connect Group is a small group of people that meet at one another's houses. Small groups have been a cornerstone of the church since its inception. There are a number of these small groups from the Maleny congregation that meet on a regular or irregular basis to share honestly with one another and build each other up in their walk with Jesus. The focus of each group varies from time to time and from group to group. At certain times, the groups are all encouraged to follow a particular study related to

the sermon themes, while at other times the focus of each group may include prayer or discussion provoked by either other studies or questions of interest to the group or simply to support one another.

Anyone who wants to join a Connect Group should contact Stuart or Jan Craig (stuart\_craig100@hotmail.com)

[STUART and JAN CRAIG]

## MALENY GARAGE SALE

Each of our Blackall Range Uniting Churches support ministries in schools in different ways. In August the Maleny congregation conducted its annual monster garage sale. It was amazing to see the whole community getting behind this effort, including our Montville and Palmwoods congregations.

Garage sales like this have benefits that go way beyond the actual fund raising. For example, it is a way for our churches to demonstrate that we support ventures that protect the environment: reuse, reduce recycle.

Of course, the funds raised are very important, and this year \$3920 was raised and given to the Maleny School Chaplaincy program. A great outcome.



The picture shows Maleny Principal, John Byrne, and Chaplain, Becky Francis, receiving the cheque from church representatives Rev Catherine Solomon and Murray Robertson.

## THE ASSEMBLY SAME GENDER MARRIAGE DECISION

The Assembly's decision on same gender marriage has provoked both interest and angst within our congregations. There will be continuing discussion for some time on the issue so I thought it might be useful to re-enforce a statement made at the Maleny service recently:

None of our three churches is currently available for the conduct of same gender marriages.

The Assembly decision:

- [a] identifies two equal and distinct statements of belief on marriage
- [b] gives the authority to church councils to decide whether such marriages can be conducted in their churches; and
- [c] gives authority to ministers/celebrants, approved by the church to conduct marriages, to decide if they will conduct such services

To assist us in our discussions, I thought it might be helpful to have the actual decision in front of us so we are all talking about the same thing. Here it is from the Assembly web-site.  
Graham

### WHAT DID THE ASSEMBLY DECIDE?

The full resolution of the Assembly was:

(a) To acknowledge:

- (i) that within the Uniting Church there is a diversity of religious beliefs and ethical understandings, developed through continuing faithful discernment and held with integrity on matters relating to sexuality and marriage; and
- (ii) that marriage is a gift God has given to humankind for the well-being of the whole human family.

(b) To determine that the Church is able to accept this diversity within its life and make the decisions necessary to enable its ministry and members to act with integrity in accordance with their beliefs.

(c) To vary its policy on marriage by recognising two statements of belief:

- (i) the belief expressed in the 1997 statement on marriage as follows:

“Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of a man and a woman to live together for life. It is intended to be the faithful lifelong union of a woman and a man expressed in every part of their life together.

In marriage, the man and the woman seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship.

In the marriage service:

- The woman and man make a public covenant with each other and with God, in the company of family and friends;
- The couple affirm their trust in each other and in God;

- **The Church affirms the sanctity of marriage and nurtures those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage and calls upon all people to support, uphold and nurture those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage.**

**Where sexual union takes place the partners seek to express mutual delight, pleasure and tenderness, thus strengthening the union of their lives together.**

**In marriage, children may be born and are to be brought up in love and security thus providing a firm foundation for society”.**

**(ii) the belief expressed in the following statement on marriage:**

**“Marriage for Christians is the freely given consent and commitment in public and before God of two people to live together for life. It is intended to be the faithful lifelong union of two people expressed in every part of their life together.**

**In marriage, the two people seek to encourage and enrich each other through love and companionship.**

**In the marriage service:**

- **The two people make a public covenant with each other and with God, in the company of family and friends;**
- **The couple affirm their trust in each other and in God;**
- **The Church affirms the sanctity of marriage and nurtures those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage and calls upon all people to support, uphold and nurture those who pledge themselves to each other in marriage.**

**Where sexual union takes place the partners seek to express mutual delight, pleasure and tenderness, thus strengthening the union of their lives together.**

**In marriage, children may be born and are to be brought up in love and security thus providing a firm foundation for society”.**

**(d) To affirm that Ministers and celebrants authorised by the Uniting Church in Australia may exercise freedom to decide whether the minister’s or celebrant’s religious beliefs allow the minister or celebrant to accept requests to celebrate marriages, as authorised under the Marriage Act and according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.**

**(e) To request the Assembly Officers to arrange for the preparation of an additional authorised marriage liturgy which reflects the understanding of marriage as outlined in the marriage statement contained in (c) (ii) above for approval by the Standing Committee at its August 2018 meeting, for use according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.**

**(f) To note that Church Councils:**

- have the authority under Regulation 4.4.1 to permit or refuse the use of any property held for the use of the Congregation for the celebration of marriages, as authorised under the Marriage Act and according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.**
- do not have the authority to require a Minister in placement in their Congregation or to prevent a Minister in their Congregation from celebrating marriages as authorised under the Marriage Act and according to the rites of the Uniting Church in Australia.**

**(g) To request the Standing Committee, taking account of advice from the Assembly Legal Reference Committee, to consider and take such action as it considers appropriate, including (if necessary) the making of additional Regulations, to enable Church Councils acting under Regulation 4.4.1 to make decisions regarding use of property for celebrating marriages, in conformity with one of the statements of belief mentioned in (c) (i) and (ii).**

## A CHALLENGE FOR SPRING – Living Right Side Up



As Spring comes, we are generally lured back out into the garden to capitalize on the newness in the air – the warmth, the budding trees, the bright colours of the emerging flowers and all that sort of thing. Signs of new life are everywhere – it is as if the natural world is being resurrected.

We feel it in other parts of our lives, too, I think. We want to leave the confines of our houses and spend more time outside where we can bask in this newness – go for a picnic, a walk on the beach, a trip to Toowoomba where we can breathe the multitude of scents that pervade the air during the Carnival of Flowers and all that sort of thing.

As I pondered this phenomenon, I wondered – If the natural world and the physical world of our own bodies both experience this surge of new life, what happens in our spiritual lives that might equate to this? What is it that revives our spirits and brings newness?

I came to the view that it is different for each one of us.

But my mind went back to something I heard many years ago. The late Rev Ivan Alcorn once visited the congregation to which I belonged and, as was his style, threw out a challenge to us. He challenged the congregation to undertake a spiritual discipline that I followed for some time but have not consciously practiced for a while – but it happens subconsciously, I think.

His challenge was simply this. He pointed out that our weekly pew-sheet gave us the lectionary readings for the following Sunday. He then told us to play a game with them by reading them in advance, sitting and considering what they had to say to us – each one of us – and then trying to guess what direction the preacher might take on Sunday.

Doing this allowed the Scripture to speak directly to us; it prepared us for the service; led to discussion with other people on what we all thought; and allowed us to participate in worship in a different way because we had prepared ourselves for what might be said. It also helped ensure there was fulsome discussion on the texts over morning tea and replaced the “Thank you for your thoughtful sermon” with a variety of comments that provoked some in depth discussion.

Rev Catherine has designated the preaching theme for October as “Living right side up”. I wonder what that means and where it comes from – fried eggs perhaps? Not really, that is “Sunny side up”, I think.

Anyway, I'd like to suggest to everyone that for the month of October, we try reading the lectionary readings in advance; we pray over them and study what they might be saying to us; and then try to think what the preacher might say about them when we worship together; and then raise our different views over morning tea.

Could be interesting.

And our spirits might encounter some newness – and we, a breath of new life.

A form of resurrection.

[GRAHAM]



## HOW'S YOUR MEMORY?

*In the Winter Edition, a number of readers submitted their "Encounters with the Holy" where they shared a moment in their lives where the human and divine met within them. Remember? There was one story for which there was "no room at the Inn". So, here it is now.*

### Oberammergau



It was the babble of voices from all over the world – Biblical in itself – that gave us the premonition that this would be a spiritually significant time for us.

The date was 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010.

The place was the village of Oberammergau in a glorious natural setting in Barvaria's largest nature reserve, the Ammergau Alps.

The event was *Passionsspiele 2010*.

The origins of this special play date back to 1633 when the Black Plague was sweeping through Europe. The villagers of Oberammergau vowed that if their town was spared they would perform "The Passion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ" every ten years. The villagers were answered by God and therefore in 1634 the first Passion Play took place. The promise has been kept and amazingly they have been honouring their pledge from generation to generation.

Only residents of Oberammergau can take part in the play. Up to 2,000 locals are involved. Men grow out their hair and beards to make the look authentic to the time. Costumes are hand made. This play is not museum-like folk theatre. It is living theatre, of the people and for the people. It reaches deep into life and seeks to convey hope.

The play took place in two parts. It was for three hours in the afternoon and then for three more hours at night. It was the first time they had staged some of the acts in the evening. Apart from the extreme cold, the advantages of night lighting added to the atmosphere. The auditorium was huge and seated 4,700, rather too snugly we from the wide-open spaces thought.

From the opening act, "Jesus enters Jerusalem" in which the cast ran onto the stage waving palm branches, you could catch the joy of the performers and how "at home" they were on the stage. Throughout the whole play the emotionally stirring music from the choir, soloists and orchestra immersed the audience and lifted one into another realm.

The crucifixion scene was, as you would expect, very moving but sensitively portrayed.

The closing act, "The encounter with the risen one", was also particularly memorable for us. The spiritual presence of Jesus was symbolized by a small glowing fire. This was carried to light successive candles and so the light was passed throughout the crowd on stage. Then, in darkness, the characters, one by one, silently left the stage, carrying their light, as a joyous Hallelujah-type chorus was sung.

When we came out into the cold night the first thing we noticed was a full moon!

[BRIAN & BARBARA RICHARDS, *Maleny*]

*[From May 16th to October 4th 2020 the 42nd Passion Play will take place in Oberammergau, Germany]*

## CHRISTIAN MEDITATION

In early August, in *Our Common Life*, Rev Ron Potter in his weekly article titled 'Being true to oneself', raised the issue of the difference between the old self and the new self and asked the question "How much of a struggle do you find it to live the new life signified in your baptism?"



No doubt there are many answers to that question. Our home group didn't get to it as it was the last on the list and we ran out of time, but one thought that came to me as a leader of the Christian Meditation Group at Maleny was – "Well, it is a daily thing. Every day I strive to move closer and closer to becoming more Christ-like". Which led me to my meditation practice.

Meditation is a tradition found at the heart of most, if not all, religions. In Christianity it has often been thought of as belonging to the mystics, or the desert mothers and fathers, or even the sole domain of the Roman Catholic branch of Christianity. All this is understandable, but I'd like to suggest that it is much broader than this – it belongs to all Christians who, in fact, seek to be true to themselves.

The Latin word – *meditatio* – has a sense of 'remaining at the centre'; the Greek – *meletan* – means 'to repeat'; and the Hebrew word translates as 'murmur', 'whisper', or 'sigh' with the sense of this being 'in the heart'. So, meditation is the practice of being attentive with the whole of our being, using a repeated word or phrase, so the resulting 'centredness' stills the body and mind and frees the spirit to grow towards God.

Our daily lives, as part of our consumer society, are so full of busyness and distraction that it is very easy for our spirit to be in a state of perpetual fasting or starving. The wholeness of our person, the source of our wellbeing, is not nurtured. So, in a sense, daily meditation is 'a way of coming home' – first to ourselves and then to God.

Scriptural references, which act as a basis for meditation, include:

- Psalm 46: 10 – *Be still and know that I am God or*
- Matthew 6: 6 – *But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*

The light of Christ resides within us all and meditators feel that their daily practice of meditation helps uncover that light and frees it to shed its 'enlightenment' on every aspect of our individual, relational and communal lives.

And I guess what I have just written is my answer to Ron's question. Daily meditation is one way of developing my spiritual life from where it is, to where I believe God wants it to be. For meditators, it is not a struggle, as such, but constant application of a practice of being open to the Spirit by closing out the things that keep pushing in upon us and fill our lives with too much 'stuff'. It is a practice that is well worth the effort, too, I believe.

The three major aspects of Christian meditation are simplicity, silence and stillness. That's it.

A group, of both women and men, meets in the Maleny church each Wednesday morning at 8.30 and anyone who feels they would like to try it, or just know more, would be very welcome. After about 45 minutes of being together at the church, we go up the town for a coffee.

If anyone wants to know a little more, but isn't attracted to being in a group – or you may wish to start your own group – please contact Graham [5494 2594].

## A DIFFERENT SORT OF PRAYER

Earlier this year, I attended a two day conference in Melbourne – “Communities in Control” – hosted by a group called OUR COMMUNITY. I now go annually as it attracts very good speakers, touches contemporary problems and allows for contact and interaction with some very interesting people.

This year, the oration was given by Professor Gillian Triggs and speakers included Stan Grant, Annabel Crabb, and Hugh Mackay among many others I had not heard of before, but all of whom were most engaging.

Some of the topics covered included:

- Not just lucky: why women do the work but don't take the credit
- The state of the nation starts in your street
- Ethical leadership: giving voice to values
- Rebuilding our political system to nurture equality
- How to change your community, your society and your thinking
- The future is now for our communities: it's time to act

From time to time at such events, some real gems of wisdom or beauty drop and take you by surprise. I would like to share one such that touched me. It came in a closing speech by the CEO of Our Community, Denis Moriarty, who quoted a prayer by a Melbourne Jewish Rabbi, Ralph Genende. I thought it beautiful in every respect.

*As community workers, let us have dreams in this land of long dreams.*

*Let the hot winds from the desert fire our imaginations.*

*Let the red soil of the plains keep us rooted to the things that matter.*

*Let our rivers, lakes and oceans flow into our hearts, giving us depth and understanding.*

*Let us honour the original inhabitants of these lingering songlines.*

*May we stand as strong and as mighty as our mountains and be as gentle as our places of quiet beauty.*

*Let our compassion be like the encompassing coastlines of our singular continent.*

*And may peace move steadily across the waters of this ancient and enduring land.*

*(Ralph Genende)*

I think each line deserves reflection in its own right and is worthy of discussion in wider groups.

[GRAHAM]



## KARL'S KORNER

### Endless War?

This year we will “celebrate” the end of World War 1 – the “War to end all wars; and the war that “will be over by Christmas”. Of course this wasn't the official end of WW1 since it officially ended in June 1919 with the signing of the Versailles Treaty which, one can reasonably argue, continued the war. At the time, as Carl von Clausewitz defined it, war was simply politics by other means, and so economic war continued. Collective punishment was commenced, holding the German public collectively responsible for the decisions of the aristocracy and the military hierarchy and demanding reparations which weren't fully paid until the beginning of this millennium. The privations this caused, particularly during the Depression, together with the shaming associated with it, was a major contributor to the resumption of the “hot” war called World War 2. When this “hot” war ended, collective punishment was resumed with interest, with the next generation forced to look at “its” evil deeds and rebuild thus profiting foreign investors.

As someone born in Germany after WW2, I've lived my whole life influenced by this history. As the Bible says, the evil mankind does affects subsequent generations down to at least the fourth and well beyond. We “Australians” are still forced to confront the evils of settlement, never mind the Irish, the Serbs, the colonisers, etc., etc. Even if we “win” wars, the aftertaste of what was necessary to do so continues and we seemingly learn nothing despite all the monuments we raise to the suffering.

And when “hot” war ceases, a “cold” war continues at all levels because we see each other as rivals or competitors in a race for personal wealth, power, prestige, etc. The new war is given different names to suit one or other of the protagonists – sexism, racism, gender discrimination, denomination, ideology, and theology to name but a few. In each case one protagonist sees him/herself as “right”, seeks to add members to his/her “gang”, and portrays the others as “wrong”, “bad”, etc. If “victory” is achieved, this is deemed a confirmation of the “rightness” of the protagonist leading to “peace” or “reconciliation” as defined by the victor. Of course nothing could be further from the truth because, to quote a character in a recent film, we can't stand the truth.

Recently we were asked at church who we were in response to Jesus' asking the disciples who people said He was and who they said He was. Listening to people's responses, what again struck me is that we confuse “who” with “what”. What we are is largely an accident of our history and pre-history in the form of genetics, place and time of birth, choice of trade (if choice was possible), etc. Jesus was a Jew, a man, possibly a carpenter or builder, even a Messiah figure if that expression was the only one the disciples could come up with. But did they answer the question? Jesus says he IS the way, the truth and the life – ultimate reality. There were doubtless many innocent individuals who were crucified during Roman times but that did not make them saviours or Messiahs. What made Jesus different was that he was the truth, etc. and we humans can't stand the truth because we, if we reflect on things, know we can't live up to it. That's why we need a saviour. Choosing Him determines who we are.

[KARL TIETZE]

## FROM LITTLE THINGS, BIG THINGS GROW

### The India Trip 19-31 July 2018

In 2004, a small group of local people started raising money to establish a sustainable income for a Girls Hostel in Kangra (North India). It is now a much wider relationship between the Mary Burnett/Downs Presbyteries and the Amritsar Diocese. One outcome – Mr Samson Ram, Rev Ayub Daniel, Miss Prita Samantaroy, Mr Vijay Kumar and Rev Ajay Singh visited South East Queensland from The Church Of North India (Amritsar Diocese) in July.

Twenty-four girls now board at the hostel in Amritsar (moved in April 2018) – half attend the Alexandra School (onsite); the others a government school nearby. Our mutual relationship provides knowledge exchange, resources, support, prayer and friendships as we learn what it means to serve Christ in our diverse contexts.

This was the first visit to Australia for all five. Rev Ayub had previously travelled to the UK and Germany. So we shared our beautiful part of the world – Lone Pine Sanctuary, Southbank, a CityCat Ride up the Brisbane River, Shelley Beach Caloundra, Maleny Dairies, Bushwalking at Kondalilla Falls, planting a tree on the Dilkusha Nature Refuge (Maleny), cycling and motorbike riding along the Blackall Range and a tour of the Gabba Cricket Ground.

They also experienced many aspects of the Uniting Church – meeting with Qld Synod Moderator Rev David Baker and Mardi Lumsden from Uniting World for breakfast at Synod Office; travelling to Toowoomba and meeting their Diocesan Bishop Bunu who was here from the Diocese for three days before going to Melbourne; attending the Downs Presbytery Meeting on Saturday 21st; preaching/sharing in Sunday morning worship at Highfields, Wilsonton, Lifeworks and St Stephens Congregations; visiting BlueCare and Lifeline in Toowoomba on Monday; then back to Brisbane.

Here, the itinerary included visiting Grace College (University of Qld Residential College), Wesley Mission Qld at Chermside including Hummingbird House (providing short-break stays and care at the end of life for children with a life-limiting condition and their families); Lakes College at Northlakes; Unity College at Caloundra; a welcome dinner hosted by Blackall Range churches where the group spoke about Diocesan activities; sharing/preaching at Montville, Maleny, Kenilworth and Caloundra Congregations.

On their final night, Rev David Baker held a Goodbye 'Home Made Pizza Oven' Dinner at his home in Karana Downs. Here we debriefed about their experiences and below are some of their comments and questions:

*'It was a great experience to attend the Kenilworth Combined Churches Worship Service (held on the 5th Sunday) and sit beside Anglican, Catholic, Pentecostal and Uniting. We only do this for special events.'*

*'Appreciated the construction of new church buildings that don't necessarily look traditional. The Highfields Church that was a bowling green. You have more liberal architecture.'*

*'Where are the children? There is a lack of children in worship.'*

*'How do you get people in church? What is your evangelism strategy?'*

*'Hospitality is very important to us and we have experienced wonderful hospitality here.'*

*'There is great thoughtfulness and vision in caring and leading your children in schools. While there are some amazing resources provided, it was the thought and wanting the best for the children that has impressed me.'*

*'The concept of space for grace. In our small group in Toowoomba our leader encouraged us in the emotion we have for a difficult topic means we don't have to show it but we can name it, ie your statement is making me angry, rather than showing the anger. Democracy in the church can be slow however, two blue cards shown meant these people were heard and not overlooked. Their opinion matters.'*

*'Society generally has Christian values without being Christian.'*

*'Very clean here and we have good hygiene habits. You can drink water from nearly anywhere.'*

*'People are given opportunities to search what skill they want to develop and learn. There is a breadth of experience and opportunity if you choose not to go the academic path.'*

*'You utilise time well.'*

When we live in a particular society and context it is hard to be objective about what, how and why we live the way we do. Their observations and insights can be helpful for us to take a step back and ask some of these same questions they ask and ponder their responses. This is an encouragement for us in the Uniting Church as the way we 'do' things is not the only way and might not be the 'best' way for this moment in time. May we pause and step back to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to us in our context.

OCTOBER 11-25, 2018 will be the next trip of Australians going to India. Those attending are Andrew Solomon (Trip Coordinator), Rev Catherine Solomon (Blackall Range Congregations), Jenny and John Park (Maleny) and Jann Bergman (Maleny who went in 2017 and February 2018), with three others pending due to work commitments and finances. Please pray for this group as they prepare to engage in a very rich experience.

Enquires contact Andrew 0438 557 677.



## THE FUNNIES PAGE

Lifted (with permission) from our Presbytery Newsletter



Like all good humour, this cartoon is two sided – funny but real!

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A COUPLE OF OTHERS THAT PEOPLE HAVE SENT ME



## LOCAL POETRY

*Close readers of previous editions of this journal may have noticed the occasional little encouragement for readers to try their hand at something creative – a story, a picture, a poem – or whatever it was that spoke. I am delighted to share two very different poems with you this time round. I wonder – have I missed any? Are there others waiting in the wings?*

*The first of the current crop is a reflection on scripture by Joyce Butterfield and the other a reflection on life by Helen Uhlmann. I commend them both to everyone as wonderful examples of what lies within us as congregations – but more importantly, as individuals. I am utterly convinced we all have the spark of the Creator within us. We have but to unloosen it.*

*My commitment as editor remains – you write and I'll publish.*

### Mary and Martha

Mary and Martha were home one day  
When Jesus called for a while to stay  
While Martha hurried to put on a meal  
Mary, at Jesus feet, did kneel.

Flustered and tired of working alone  
Martha asked, "Must I work on my own?"  
Jesus rebuked Martha with words to explain  
That Mary had chosen the right to remain.

Most women feel it was very unfair  
For Mary to sit and do nothing but care  
What Jesus was saying to her that day  
'So, Martha, come close to listen and pray'.

Martha, Martha, your talent to serve  
Must just for a time be put in reserve  
I do know your guest was so very special  
You wanted to make him feel extra special.

But keep the meal simple, a basket of dates  
Figs, water and wine, some rolls on a plate  
Plenty of food to supply everyone  
So relax and be happy. All is done.

Listen to Jesus and grow in your wisdom  
For Jesus has so much to tell us you know  
So always be ready in your faith to grow  
And to God give the glory and your love bestow.

[JOYCE BUTTERFIELD]

## The Show Pony

The show pony within...  
experienced  
practiced  
persistent

It has learned to perform  
Impressively  
Captivatingly  
Always gleeful in the presence of an audience

It shakes its gleaming mane  
Prances becomingly  
Performs tricks with a flourish

Delighting in the captivation of the audience  
Basking in the admiration  
Glowing in the warmth of positive regard

Filling that empty void  
At the centre of my being  
That sprouting and invasive seed of doubt...  
Of lurking unworthiness

Years it took  
To name that pony  
To build a secure stable  
To entice it inside  
Close the door  
Slide the latch

But it whinnies  
In the dark and insecure night  
In the first glow of the dawn  
In the unfolding of the day  
When the lure of the audience beckons

The relenting and releasing is insidious

First, I crack the door.  
We are eye to eye.  
That pretty, beguiling eye  
Deep and soft  
It winks and lures

I reach in to touch the pony  
The sheer perfection of its velvet muzzle  
With such softness  
It gently nudges and caresses my hand  
The comfort...  
The reassurance...

[HELEN UHLMANN]

It nudges the door wider open  
And the splendour of its beguiling beauty  
Captivates and distracts me  
And in that moment it bursts forth

At first  
I delight in its freedom  
It frolics and struts  
Light reflecting on its gleaming coat  
As it perform its tricks  
To great adulation

So satisfying...  
So reassuring...  
self doubt and insignificance flee  
For a deliciously relished time

But insight dawns  
The realisation...

Focus on the pony  
Blinds to the other  
Distracts from the task  
Bringing omission and neglect  
Trapped in the web of the pony  
Again

The stable is built  
That hard work not all for nothing  
I can lure it back in  
Close the door  
Seek the spiritual centring  
In The One  
The Only One  
So much Greater than the pony

Full  
Complete  
Transforming  
Releasing  
Illuminating  
Inspiring  
Revealing  
Nourishing  
Comforting

Light  
Grace  
Love  
The essence of life itself

## PRAISING HANDS

A minister is not often asked to repeat what has been said in a sermon, but Catherine achieved this distinction recently when she shared with us a simple way of praying by holding our hands together as we were taught as children and praying for what each finger represents or signifies.

A number of people suggested that we should put it in *The New Vine* where we could have it before us to remind us. To our horror, or shame, none of us could remember it in its entirety so Catherine has been kind enough to tell us again.

We salved our consciences by knowing it was worth repeating – so here it is.

- Small finger – pray for the small people (babies, children and youth) and pray for the small groups in our society (marginalised, vulnerable)
- Ring finger is the weakest finger - pray for the weak
- Tall finger – pray for those in leadership positions
- Pointer Finger – pray for those who instruct and teach
- Thumb (pointing to us) - pray for those near to us



## KIDS' RIDS

Why do cows give milk?

*Because they aren't smart enough to sell it.*

Why should crabs be snooped on by police officers?

*Because they are always pinching things.*

Why is a bird sitting on a wire fence like a coin?

*Because it has a head on one side and a tail on the other.*

## CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT

We are calling right now for book reviews for the Summer Edition of *the New Vine*.

What book have you read this year that spoke to your Spirit?

What book, CD, video has fed you most?

Please share it with us.

It doesn't have to be long – just tell us why you liked it and want to share.

Then we will all have some great ideas for Christmas presents.

[grandar@bigpond.net.au](mailto:grandar@bigpond.net.au) is the place to send it – or just put it in my hand.

## BLACKALL RANGE CHURCHES – CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

### MALENY

#### *Sundays*

9.45 am

Worship Service held weekly; Holy Communion 1st Sunday of month

4.30 pm

Worship Service with focus on young people, all ages welcome

#### *Tuesdays*

7 am – 8 am

Silent Prayer: weekly, Moyra Jones 5494 2661

9 am – 3 pm

Church Office Open: weekly, 9.00am to 3.00pm, 5429 6995

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Band of Brothers: 1st and 3rd Tuesdays, time and venue vary,  
Roger Smith 5494 3784

#### *Wednesdays*

8.30 am

Christian Meditation: weekly, Rev Graham Dempster 5494 2594

#### *Thursdays*

9 am – 3 pm

Church Office Open: weekly, 9.00am to 3.00pm, 5429 6995

9.30 am

Ladies Friendship Group: 3rd Thursday of month, Nancy Baker 5494 2961  
or Marnie McCallum 5499 9807

10.00 am

Ladies' R&R Book Club: 1st Thursday of month, Jocelyn Brooker 5494 3693

10.00 am

Ladies' MUCR Book Club: 1st Thursday of month, Karin Ellemor 5494 3379

#### *Fridays*

1.30 pm

Know Your Bible Group (KYB): weekly, Dorothy Tietze 5494 2486

6.30-8.30 pm

Year 6 Youth Group P1

#### *Saturdays*

9.00 am

Prayer Meeting: 2nd Saturday of month, Ray Jones 0419 723 698

#### *Other Meetings*

Pastoral Care

Quarterly in February, May, August and November,  
Dorothy Tietze 5494 2486

Church Council Monthly, Merilyn Milton 5435 2595

Home Groups: For details, please phone Stuart and Jan Craig 5494 2990

### MONTVILLE

#### *Daily*

10 am – 3 pm

Reflection Gallery. Current Theme: Quiet Places by Rev Graham Warne

#### *Sundays*

8.15 am

Worship Service held weekly; Holy Communion 2nd Sunday of month

#### *Tuesdays*

9.00 am

"Know Your Bible" at Flaxton, Margot Stuart, 5476 3777

Bible studies and Market Days are conducted throughout the year.

Details are given in the Church Notices.

### PALMWOODS

#### *Sundays*

10.00 am

English Worship Service held weekly

12 00 pm

Tongan Worship Service held weekly

10.00 am

Combined Service held on 2nd Sunday of the month with Holy Communion

6.00 pm

Dinner and chat fortnightly, Pastor Kay Nixon 5445 9035