



# THE new vine

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA  
Blackall Range Uniting Churches

(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville, and Palmwoods Areas)

Articles or queries may be emailed to: Rev Graham Dempster, [grandar@bigpond.net.au](mailto:grandar@bigpond.net.au)

Issue No. 9, Summer 2018



## EDITORIAL COMMENT

*I think I might be getting old – or at least approaching that point.*

*In preparing this edition, I found myself looking back to what had gone before. Not especially looking forward. A bit sad really. Of course, in my humble opinion, there was good reason for this. Simply put - this is the last edition where “O[ur] Catherine Says:” appears. The first was just over two years ago – how time flies. The next edition will be different because of this.*

*The editorial comment in the first edition in October 2016 said this:*

*So, I’ve accepted Catherine’s invitation for the next twelve months to see how it all pans out.*

*My hope is that, together, we might explore different aspects of our faith in a variety of ways; contribute to a shared experience of our faith journeys; reflect on how we are, as individuals and congregations, living by Gospel values within our different communities; and come to understand and appreciate the Uniting Church for the great church it is.*

*I have absolutely no recollection of there having been any sort of evaluation after twelve months – we just sort of kept going. Hopefully, that is fine with most people and we’ll do that into the future, I guess, even when we are leaderless.*

*Similarly, we haven’t really said too much about how our exploration of our faith has gone and all those other things that were dreamt of at the time. My sense is that they are still worthy objectives and hopefully we can continue to pursue them together, whatever happens in the immediate future.*

*But I am sure we would all like to express to Catherine our heartfelt appreciation for her presence among us, and all that has meant over the past four years. We have each experienced this in a variety of ways and will, no doubt, speak to her individually about this before she leaves. And if we feel this time is going to be difficult for us, we can be assured it will be equally difficult for her and Andrew as well. This is very real parting and loss, but if our faith says anything to us, surely it says that out of death comes new life. And that is the promise for both the Solomons and the congregations at this time. That is worth celebrating.*

*And so we approach Christmas 2018 with mixed feelings. Whatever our feelings, may we hold to the truth we have learnt over the years – that God chose to enter our human state in the birth of his Son Jesus. God is with us and so we sing – Alleluiah.*

*Peace and Blessings, Graham*

## INDEX

Editorial Comment .....	Page 1
Who's Who in the Blackall Range Churches .....	2
O'Catherine Says .....	3
On a Personal Note.....	4
Remembrance Day .....	5-6
Kids' Rids .....	6
Prepare the Way of the Lord – Christmas is Coming!.....	7-8
Karl's Korner – Job, Leibnitz and Dr Who.....	9
Poems that Speak.....	10
Time Lines.....	11-12
If Dogs were Teachers.....	12-13
Down Memory Lane – “Grown Up Christmas List” .....	14
Book Reviews .....	15-19
Blackall Range Churches – Congregational Activities .....	20

## WHO'S WHO IN THE BLACKALL RANGE CHURCHES

**Parish Minister:** Rev Catherine Solomon: Phone: 0438 557 677, 5494 3119,  
Email: [inister@malenyuniting.com.au](mailto:inister@malenyuniting.com.au)

**Palmwoods:** Pastor Kay Nixon: Phone: 0412 539 020, 5478 9209,  
Email: [kayn43@gmail.com](mailto:kayn43@gmail.com)

**Treasurer:** Mr Roger Smith: Phone: 5494 3784,  
Email: [phelan.smith@i.net.com.au](mailto:phelan.smith@i.net.com.au)

**Church Office:** 1290 Maleny-Landsborough Road, PO Box 297, Maleny

***Hours:*** Tuesday 9am – 3pm

Thursday 9am – 3pm

***Phone:*** 5429 6995, ***Email:*** [admin@malenyuniting.com.au](mailto:admin@malenyuniting.com.au)

***Internet:*** [www.malenyuniting.com.au](http://www.malenyuniting.com.au)

***Facebook:*** Maleny Uniting Church; Montville Uniting Church;  
Palmwoods Uniting Church

**Joint Management Committee:** Rev Catherine Solomon (Chair), John Benn,  
Peter Callaghan, John Daniells, Duncan Drew, Naua Lolohea, Pastor Kay  
Nixon, Karis Ross, Roger Smith (Treasurer), 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 Bruce Johnson, Rev Bob  
Philpot, Rev Ron Potter, Rev Brian Richards, Rev George Woodward

## O'CATHERINE SAYS

This November our congregations are celebrating 2018. With hindsight we can see where God has worked and provided, we see what we could have done better or where we should have stayed silent. C.S Lewis once penned "Isn't it funny how day by day nothing changes, but when you look back everything is different."

The disciples did not fully understand Jesus' prediction about his death when he told them. It took them hindsight, reflecting afterwards on his warnings for them to fully appreciate the gift of his life, death and resurrection. I wonder if Christ looked back on his time on earth and wanted to do something better or different? The humanity of Jesus makes me think 'maybe so,' but the divinity of Jesus draws me into his perfect and powerful healing presence.

This will be my last contribution to the New Vine. So with hindsight, I reflect on my ministry here among you. I celebrate God's presence within your lives and the privilege it has been to be part of your story. I see where I could have done things better or where I should have stepped aside, allowing others to step up. There are many learnings that I take with me and go in God's faithful promise to equip me as I serve. This is the call on my life.

God continues to call you in worship, witness and service for eternal benefits. As you "grow faith... share hope..." I encourage you all to learn from past lessons, to reflect on life now and to also wait upon the Holy Spirit's guidance for what's around the bend.



"So then brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed onto you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. May our Lord Jesus Christ himself who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word."

*Rev Catherine Solomon*

## ON A PERSONAL NOTE

As I re-read the first [October 2016] edition, I was struck by my opening line of the Editorial Comment:

*During my mid-year holiday I sought to discern the direction my life might take upon return.*

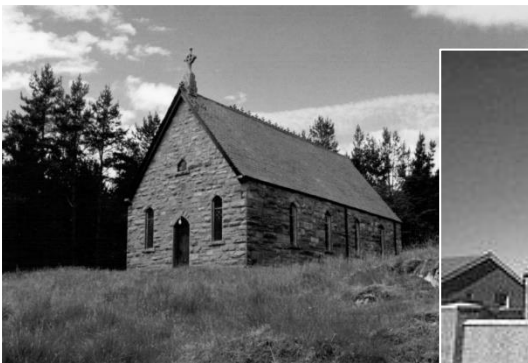
Editing *The New Vine*, which happened very soon thereafter, was but part of the answer.

Two years later, I think I may have found another part of the answer and for those who haven't heard, I'd like to share it with you as I'm quite excited by it.

By the time this edition reaches you, I will be in the Scottish Highlands and I suppose you could call it a working holiday. I'm not really sure, at this point, what lies ahead other than the Church of Scotland has accepted me as a voluntary church worker and has issued the necessary documentation to allow me to get a visa to work over there. I now have a multi entry visa that allows me to come and go as often as I like over the next two years to lead worship and preach as required in a particular area.

This came about when the minister in the church nearest our cottage, who already had responsibility for three congregations, inherited another three when their minister was called elsewhere. She wants, if possible, to keep all six churches functioning – a big call. And so, I am going over to help her out for a while. The arrangement is as open as that. I am to be her assistant minister helping only with services.

My first services are to be Remembrance Day services at Tongue and then Skerray on 11 November – one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. At this point, I know little more, but I expect the remembrance services will be held in the church grounds where the war memorials are situated, and the church service will then go on inside the church. Not at all sure just yet.



If you want to Google them, the other churches in the mix are found at the Farr Parish Church at Bettyhill, Strathnaver Mission near Syre, and then Altnaharra, and Melness. All are in a lovely area on the far north coast of Scotland. I expect I will go to all six while I'm there.

The direction for my life that I sought – was obviously – “*Go North, young man*”.

I look forward to seeing you all again early in 2019 – I expect to have stories to tell.

*Graham*



## REMEMBRANCE DAY



This edition of our journal will be with readers at some time close to Remembrance Day on 11 November. So, let's take the opportunity to reflect upon this day and what it means to us. Readers are invited to write a reflection on this year's celebration, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, for publishing in our next edition, due on 1 March, 2019. Please consider doing this.

We are all, no doubt, familiar with the early facts. This is how I recall them:

Remembrance Day was originally called Armistice Day and it commemorated the end of the hostilities for the Great War (World War I), and the signing of the armistice, which occurred at the 11th hour, of the 11th day, of the 11th month - November 11, 1918. The commemoration started in the UK and British Commonwealth, at the instigation of the then king, on the first anniversary in 1919, hence the name Armistice Day. The name changed after World War II to Remembrance Day to commemorate those who died in all wars.

It is also called Poppy Day in some places and in the USA, Veterans' Day.

In Australia, of course, we also have ANZAC Day that celebrates the landing at Gallipoli on 25 April. It is celebrated mainly in Australia and New Zealand and some Pacific nations. In Australia this day is a national holiday, whereas Remembrance Day is not a holiday – it comes as a pause for a minute's silence at 11.00 am.

Both days are regarded as very significant days in Australia, and rightly so. It is important for us, as a nation, to honour and respect those men and women who have served in the protection of our country and especially those who died as a result. We owe this to their memory.

But how does this play out 100 years later?

What does the celebration say to us today?

Is there an attempt to make the celebrations each year bigger and better than the last? Is this what it is all about?

Is the amount of money governments spend on such commemorations, and overseas cemeteries, well spent, or could it perhaps be spent on other things which some would see as more valuable to our way of life today?

When we see the size of the crowds at Dawn Services and other such parades, do we compare them to the numbers that gather for services at dawn on Easter morning to celebrate the resurrection, and ask just what this might be saying?

Does the Christian church have a role to play in these celebrations, and if so, what do you think that is?

These questions are not meant to be in any way disrespectful, they are framed to help us think about our nation, its beliefs and practices, and where our churches might fit.

Please reflect on all this and present a view for publication next time.

Graham



## KIDS' RIDS

What do you call a broken can-opener?

*A can't opener.*

What do you call a deer with no eyes?

*No-idea.*

Why would opticians get thrown out of a restaurant?

*They might if they made spectacles of themselves.*

What happens when a cat eats a lemon?

*It becomes a sourpuss.*

What starts with E and ends with E but often has only one letter?

*An envelope.*

What do you call shoes made from banana skins?

*Slippers.*

Why did the tap dancer have to give up his work?

*Because he kept falling in the sink.*



## PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD

### Christmas is Coming!

"a voice of one calling in the wilderness,  
'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'  
*Mark 1: 3 quoting Isaiah 40:3*

Christmas is different for each of us. We see it differently; we treat it differently; we prepare for it differently. Life can become very hectic and demanding as we try to juggle priorities, activities and responsibilities.

In an attempt to help with the task of keeping some sort of balance in it all, there may be benefit in our looking at some ways we might choose to not lose sight of the sacred within it all and help keep our souls nourished, and love alive.

And it may well feel as though we are a voice calling in the wilderness.... but still, the call is there.

We have until the first Sunday in December, the start of Advent, to prepare for what we will do to enhance our spiritual journey during Christmas this year. So, let's look at some possibilities - some ideas to explore.



- [1] We could make conscious decisions about what we are going to be involved in, and leave the rest for others who are perhaps more suited, more able, more energetic etc. And with what we move into, we might choose to what depth we become involved. By doing either of these things, we are trying to take control of things, as the loss of control is sometimes what causes our anxiety and stress.
- [2] Something very similar, is the act of letting go. The questions about whose place do we all go to this year; at what stage in their life do we allow the children to arrange their own celebrations while we wait to see if we are invited; is there an easier way to celebrate rather than preparing the same sort of grand meal we experienced as children; is there a way of sharing presents that doesn't create unnecessary tensions among the children and sometime parents? If we could but let some of these things go – think about how important they really are in the great big scheme of things and respond accordingly – we may find that Christmas is a much easier time to negotiate.
- [3] We might ponder whether our Christmas spirit may be improved if we were to think a little less about acquisition and more of sharing with those who have little. A Christmas dinner shared with someone we know to be lonely; an unexpected gift for someone who has no-one to share such things with and who would therefore have no expectation of receiving a present at all. Surprise them and surprise ourselves.

- [4] We might ask if Christmas needs to be just the one day, or could it be staggered, or staged, over a period, thus allowing us to become involved with a host more people than just immediate family.
- [5] Does it ever occur to us, as we race around doing all manner of things, that it is not necessary for us to try to be all things to all people. We sometimes fall for this and Christmas is one of those times when it happens. Take a step back; take a deep breath; and do what we can, rather than what we feel we must.
- [6] For something totally different from what is mentioned above, we could look to taking time to retreat from a lot of activity and tend to our spirits on a daily basis. Most Christian bookstores have a variety of study books for individuals that cover the Advent season and reflect upon the Incarnation. Engagement with one of these studies ensures we are both taking time out and also seeking to expand our understanding and experience of the work of the Spirit. A daily devotional time like this is very worthwhile.
- [7] Finally, we have Connect Groups with a study for each of the four weeks in Advent. This year, written by one of our own groups, the studies look at the spiritual growth in the lives of those most closely involved in Jesus' birth. Interesting, different, and with a little bit of a challenge, the pages of the booklet are well worth turning.

However we choose to celebrate this Christmas, may the Peace and Joy of the Lord be ours, and stay with us into the New Year.

*Graham*



*O Lord, may your kingdom come soon  
But please grant your servant this boon:  
When the heavenly choir  
Sings the praise of Messiah  
May it please use a Methodist tune.*

[Limerick from Rev Peter Fuller, parish minister at Belconnen, ACT and Wattle Park, NSW  
45 years ago]



## KARL'S KORNER

### Job, Leibnitz and Dr. Who

In ancient days, people naturally thought in very 'spiritual' terms. So God was (or the gods were) deemed to have intentions or interests in human behaviour. We should be familiar with the story of Job which, I think, might be considered a 'thought experiment'. Job is the man in the test tube, so to speak. He is the subject of an experiment – is he 'behaving' because he's fortunate or is there a deeper cause? The experiment is run and it seems to disprove the theory that it was because he's fortunate (i.e. has God's favour). There are unfortunate bi-products of the experiment – Job's family, etc. – but they aren't the focus of the experiment.

During what we call 'the enlightenment', philosophers adopted a more scientific approach. Thus it was that now it was God in the test tube. Gottfried Leibnitz (1646 - 1716), the co-discoverer of calculus and whose mathematical symbols we use, hypothesised that God was doing the best He could to keep the world as good as possible given mankind's shortcomings. Voltaire thought this was ridiculous and wrote a satirical story called 'Candide' in which the main character, whose mentor believes Leibnitz's theory, travels the world witnessing and/or experiencing all kinds of disaster and depravity, finally settling down on a farm and absorbing himself in the simple life and work, thus forgetting about philosophy. The aim seemed to be to ridicule both a loving God's existence and Leibnitz's philosophising. Since man was now 'the measure of all things', man can put God in the test tube and run experiments on Him.

But running experiments on a thinking being is notoriously difficult. The whole idea of science is to determine the rules of a mechanistic universe where everything – EVERY thing – is determined by physical laws. In such a universe, you could not change your mind since everything is predetermined. One factor that is often overlooked is time. And so we come to Dr. Who, our do-gooder 'Time Lord' who rushes around time and space in his Tardis subduing evil-doers with the aid of, among other things, his 'sonic screwdriver'.

Now I grew up reading the science fiction of Issac Asimov. His science fiction at least sounded plausible given certain technological developments as opposed to science fantasy – possibly because he was a scientist (and published several very readable books on scientific subjects). He is credited with proposing the 'three laws of robotics' which are becoming more relevant every day. However, it was a story by a different author which caught my attention. In this story a time-travelling crew travels backward in time to make 'adjustments' hoping to avert future disasters. However, as the story points out, they must make the absolutely minimal changes so that they themselves do not cease to be in the future. Not exactly a factor taken into Dr. Who's calculations. Perhaps that's God's problem.

Karl Tietze



## POEMS THAT SPEAK

By now, readers should be well aware of the editor's conviction that, given we are all created in the image of God, there lies within each one of us, a spark of that Creator God. This creativity lies dormant until we choose to release it. His theory goes on to urge us all to try our hand at something creative – paint, play music, sing, write poetry, tell a story, knit, work with wood or wool – whatever – but let it loose on the world and rejoice in the freedom this brings. Some of us even respond to his ravings.

So, imagine his delight when recently one reader placed an envelope in his hand and said, "There's a poem in there for The New Vine." Upon opening the envelope it was discovered the poem was not written by the person who delivered the envelope. It was a copy of a poem, in beautiful calligraphic script, that hangs on her wall at home where she sees it every day. It is there because it speaks to her! And she so wants to share it with us all. So, here it is.

*He comes to us as One unknown,  
without a name,  
as of old, by the seaside,  
he came to those men who knew him not.  
He speaks to us  
the same words;  
"Follow thou me!"  
and sets us to the tasks  
which he has to fulfill for our time.  
He commands,  
and to those who obey him,  
whether they be wise or simple,  
he will reveal himself  
in the toils,  
the conflicts,  
the sufferings which they shall pass  
through in his fellowship,  
and,  
as an ineffable mystery,  
they shall learn in their own experience  
who he is."*

Albert Schweitzer

So. I wonder if listening to music, or poetry, or reading and appreciating such things is also a creative act?

What do you think?

Graham



## TIME LINES

Once the hustle and bustle of Christmas is over for another year, and the family has gone home, we often find there are spaces for some peace and quiet that, I suggest, are often used for personal reflection. We are prompted to think about a variety of things – family relationships, holidays, peace on earth, what the past year has shown or given us, what we might hope for the new year, jobs to be done around the house, visits that need to be made – the list goes on.

I wonder, though, if there is room for us this year to sit and think about the development of our lives, and especially our spiritual lives. Seems to me this is a worthwhile thing to do from time to time.

If we were of a mind to try this, there are a couple of ways to go about it that might help us.

The first is to try to review all the big decisions we have made in our lives and prayerfully ask ourselves if, or how, our lives would have been different had we made a different choice at the time of the decision. We are looking to find how our faith journey may have been affected.

Questions might include things like:

- If I had chosen to go to a different school
- If I had taken/or not taken a decision to follow Jesus in my teens
- If I had gone to a different church or become involved in a different denomination.
- If I had gone/or not gone to university
- If I had chosen a different career option
- If I had married, married someone else, or not married
- If I had responded differently in crisis situations

Imagine you are walking down the road of life and you come to a fork in the road – you chose to go one way but what may have happened had you taken the other path?

As you ponder on your questions, and answers, wrap it all in prayer – which, I expect will arise naturally, and hand it all to God who both gave you free will and protection along the way.

The second suggested method is to draw a time line on a piece of paper starting with the year you were born and stopping with this year and mark on the line all the years when things you believe shaped your life, happened. e.g.

- [in say black] all family birthdays – siblings, your own children. Do the same with significant deaths
- [in say red] mark all education/employment highlights
- [in say blue] other significant happenings – marriage, divorce, house changes, successes, failures
- [in say green] special one-off things – holidays, recognitions
- [in say yellow] mark all faith highlights – decisions, turning points, churches, and activities

Again, sit and think about everything you have named and submit it to further reflection and prayer. Ask if there is more still to come and wait for an answer.

The final approach is to do much the same with people, places and activities.

- Write the names of all the people who have had the most influence on your life. Beside their name, write what it was they did for you, what lasting impact it has had on your life, and why you treasure it.
- Do the same with activities you have been engaged in – sport, voluntary work, service of any kind. Who got you involved and what did it do for you? How have you been shaped by it?
- Add to these lists, all the special places where you felt exposed to God. List the secret places you like to retreat to when you need space. Ask why it is so special; what does it do for you?

These things are not set in stone. Use what you will and add to it the things have been important in shaping your life – the things that make you who you are. Think about them; pray over them; and work with them to become more and more like Jesus.

Thank you to the reader who sent this article to me suggesting it be shared with everyone.

Graham



## IF DOGS WERE TEACHERS

*Thank you to the reader who sent this article to me suggesting it be shared with everyone.*

Being a vet, I was called to examine a ten-year-old Irish Wolfhound named Belker. The owners – Ron, his wife Lisa, and their little boy Shane – were all very attached to Belker and were hoping for a miracle. So, I examined Belker and found he was dying of cancer.

I told the family we couldn't do anything for Belker and offered to perform the euthanasia procedure for the old dog in their home.

As we made arrangements, Ron and Lisa told me they thought it would be good for six-year-old Shane to observe the procedure, as they felt he might learn something from the experience.

The next day I felt the familiar catch in my throat as Belker's family surrounded him.

Shane seemed so calm, petting the old dog for the last time, that I wondered if he





understood what was going on. Within a few minutes, Belker slipped peacefully away.

The little boy seemed to accept Belker's transition without any difficulty or confusion.

We sat together for a while after Belker's death, wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal lives are shorter than human lives. Shane, who had been listening quietly, piped up, "I know why."

Startled, we all turned to him.

What came out of his mouth next stunned me. I'd never heard a more comforting explanation. It has changed the way I try to live.

He said, "People are born so that they can learn how to live a good life – like loving everybody all the time and being nice, right?"

The six-year-old continued, "Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don't have to stay as long."

Remember, if a dog was a teacher you would learn things like:

- When loved ones come home, always run to greet them;
- Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride;
- Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy;
- Take naps;
- Stretch before rising;
- Run, romp and play daily;
- Thrive on attention and let people touch you;
- Avoid biting when a simple growl will do;
- On warm days, stop to lie on your back in the grass;
- On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree;
- When you're happy, dance around and wag your entire body;
- Delight in the simple joy of a long walk;
- Be loyal;
- Never pretend to be something you're not;
- If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it;
- When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently.

There comes a time in life when you walk away from all the drama and the people who create it. You surround yourself with people who make you laugh; you forget the bad and focus on the good. So love the people who treat you right and think good thoughts for the ones who don't. Life is too short to be anything but happy.

**DON'T COMPLAIN ABOUT GROWING OLD... NOT EVERYONE GETS THE PRIVILEGE.**



## DOWN MEMORY LANE

### Grown-Up Christmas List

*As we speed towards year's end, Christmas looms - as does the Christmas Tree Festival at Maleny. This year, the theme is "Christmas Growing Up" which brings a nostalgic tone to proceedings and memories of music like Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer and White Christmas and Frank Sinatra. Ah, those were the days. But what about something a little more modern. In 1990, David Foster (music) and Linda Thompson-Jenner (lyrics) came up with a new song - Grown-up Christmas list. A couple of years later Amy Grant added a verse she wrote - the one that starts with "As children we believed". This version is printed below and gives food for thought as we approach Christmas in 2018, some 25 years later.*

*Do you remember me?  
I sat upon your knee.  
I wrote to you with childhood fantasies.*

*Well, I'm all grown up now,  
But still need help somehow.  
I'm not a child but my heart still can dream.*

*So here's my lifelong wish,  
My grown-up Christmas list,  
Not for myself, but for a world in need:*

*No more lives torn apart,  
Then wars would never start,  
And time would heal all hearts.  
And every one would have a friend,  
And right would always win,  
And love would never end  
This is my grown-up Christmas list.*

*As children we believed  
The grandest sight to see  
Was something lovely wrapped beneath the tree.  
Well, heaven surely knows  
That packages and bows  
Can never heal a hurting human soul.  
No more lives torn apart,  
And wars would never start,  
And time would heal all hearts.  
And every one would have a friend,  
And right would always win,  
And love would never end  
This is my grown-up Christmas list.*

*What is this illusion called, the innocence of youth?  
Maybe only in our blind belief can we ever find the truth!*

*No more lives torn apart,  
Then wars would never start,  
And time would heal all hearts.  
And every one would have a friend,  
And right would always win,  
And love would never end  
This is my grown-up Christmas list.  
This is my only lifelong wish,  
This is my grown-up Christmas list!*

## BOOK REVIEWS

*A quote from Issue No 6, Autumn edition, 2018:*

*It is important to our spiritual growth that, from time to time, we read, view, or hear something new, different and challenging to our faith understanding that might have us see our discipleship expand and mature in some way, or perhaps it may simply feed our spirit..... could we all try to experience something that challenges us this year and then write a short review for our next summer edition.... it will provide each of us with another way of sharing our faith journey.*

*And this is the Summer edition where it was hoped we would all have written something to share. So, what do we have?*

*You might remember this from Autumn - it is probably worth repeating. ... Graham*

***THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON -***  
***A Meditation on Fathers, Brothers and Sons*** by Henri J Nouwen

This is not a new book – first published in 1992 – but, in my view, a real gem worth reading again and again. Nouwen stumbled across Rembrandt's painting – The return of the Prodigal son – and meditated on it at length, and in great depth, and in so doing measured his own life against it with quite profound results. He soon after left the life of an internationally renowned academic, speaker and teacher to work in an institution for intellectually disabled people in France. In the painting, in the hands of the father that were clasping his son, Nouwen saw the hands of God [one was male and one was female]. These hands spoke to him of grief, forgiveness and generosity as well as safety and security – all things he was searching for in his life. He longed for that embrace and which, as he examined the roles of the younger son, the older son and the father, led him to the view that there were parts of them all in each of us that we need to be aware of, and respond to, appropriately. A wonderfully challenging book that does not allow the reader to escape easily.

*Submitted by Graham Dempster*

***ADVENTUROUS SPIRIT***  
 by Heather Hawkins

During my last holiday I read this inspiring story about an Australian woman who had a life changing experience at 41 years of age. She was diagnosed with stage one ovarian cancer and she doubted whether she was going to survive. She mentions her faith in God but this biography speaks more about an adventurous spirit that was reignited. For someone who as a child was more of a sprinter than long distance runner, at 47 years of age she ran in a 4km mother's day fun run with her children. Five years later she had run 17 marathons and 3 ultra marathons. Why does she run? You will have to read the book. While you're reading hopefully you'll be inspired to try something you've never done before as you'll never know where it will lead you.

*Submitted by Catherine Solomon*

***RUTHLESS TRUST ... The Ragamuffins' Path to God***

By Brennan Manning

This has been a “go to” book for me, revisiting it several times over the past few years as I have wrestled with what it means to trust God and live authentically to who I am (warts and all) in all the circumstances that life brings. It’s all about grace, in a nutshell.

Brennan, a former Catholic priest and fervent believer in what he calls the relentless love of God, is a self-confessed “ragamuffin” who has struggled with alcoholism and in doing so, has experienced the true depth of God’s grace. In his later years Brennan would spend half his year in active ministry as a travelling preacher /evangelist and the other half in prayer, contemplation and solitude. I find his writings profoundly wise and insightful.

In this book, Brennan explores trust in a truly refreshing, confirming and inspiring way. He introduces the topic by inviting the reader to identify with the ragamuffin “who walks the way of ruthless trust in the irreversible forgiveness of the Master”. He speaks of “ragamuffin spirituality” in which the “felt knowledge of the tenderness of Jesus lifts us, scarred and depressed after sin, gently to Himself”. Brennan encourages us towards a spirituality which is real, raw and authentic – stripped of pretence and pharisaical self-righteousness.

This book has changed me in profound ways. Read it if you dare is my recommendation! As Brennan says, “Live free or die” is the ragamuffin motto. To be all in, with Jesus, in a relationship of ruthless trust brings freedom from the spiritual perfectionism which plagues so many of us. Go on ... read it!

*Submitted by Helen Uhlmann*

***BINDING THE STRONG MAN: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus***

by Ched Myers

It has taken me five years to work my way through this 500 page book. For much of that time this commentary was my Sunday morning “primer”. Quite frankly I don’t think I could have gotten there that much quicker. To be clear, my encounter with this rediscovery of the Gospel of Mark has changed my life. As the title suggests, this text explores the political dimension of what Jesus was on about during his short earthly ministry. This is not politics as we commonly use the term nowadays but more broadly it is dealing with those activities, actions, and policies that are used to gain and hold power. Put more simply – who gets what, when and how.

The North American author, Ched Myers, has a deep interest in restorative justice, biblical literacy, ecological discipleship and radical economic sharing. In this book he showcases how Jesus challenges oppressive political and religious authorities. Now celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> year of print, I believe the text remains relevant to our context because it does not shy away from the struggle to *envision and embody a different way of being human and Christian*. Importantly, the author has refused to leave the Biblical text glued to the first century. Ched wrestles with what Mark was on about just as Mark wrestles to reveal what Jesus was on about. This book continues to remain ahead of the curve.

*Submitted by Peter Uhlmann*



### **THE EIGHT CORE PRINCIPLES**

*The prophetic principles that provide the foundation for the teachings of Richard Rohr, the work of the Rohr Institute and the living School for Action and Contemplation* By Richard Rohr

This is an interesting book that provides a guide for the inner pilgrimage. It arises from years of study, contemplation and active ministry; challenges readers to strip themselves of their pretensions and to face life honestly and with integrity; and it confronts readers with “thin places” where they are faced with the assertion – “Only the True Self can live the Gospel”. It covers many of the broader themes of his writing and brings us, not what we want to hear, but what we need to know. Without revealing any of the substance of the book, it may be worthwhile simply to list the eight core principles as they are listed as chapters in the book and we can each imagine what the chapters may contain. The principles are:

- 1 The teaching of Jesus is our central reference point
- 2 We need a contemplative mind in order to do compassionate action.
- 3 The best criticism of the bad is the practice of the better. Oppositional energy only creates more of the same.
- 4 Practical truth is more likely found at the bottom and the edges than at the top or centre of most groups, institutions, and cultures.
- 5 We will support true authority, the ability to ‘author’ life in others, regardless of the group.
- 6 Life is about discovering the right questions more than having the right answers.
- 7 True religion leads us to experience of our True Self and undermines my false self.
- 8 We do not think ourselves into a new way of living, but we live ourselves into a new way of thinking.

*Submitted by Graham Dempster*

### **“PENGUIN BLOOM”**

by Cameron Bloom and Bradley Trevor Greive

This was a recent Book Club read for me. It is a true story about a young Sydney family (the Blooms) whose life was shattered by a devastating freak accident while on holidays in Thailand. The mother of 3 boys was left paralysed. However, in her darkest days, the family experienced the unexpected arrival of an injured magpie chick (Penguin). Nursing Penguin back to “life” and including her in all their day to day activities made a powerful difference to the dynamics of the whole family as they struggled to come to terms with their new altered situation. “Angels come in all shapes and sizes” is a quote from the book. The writing is personal, raw, tender, honest and confronting, yet uplifting and inspiring. The underlying message is one of the true meaning of love, compassion, resilience and courage to deal with whatever life throws at you. Beautiful photography accompanies the simple text and layout. If you can't get hold of the book, watch out for the movie (in the pipeline), though I'd recommend reading the book first!

*Submitted by Barbara Richards*

**THE GIFT OF YEARS: GROWING OLD GRACEFULLY**

by Joan Chittister

What a delightful book this is for those older folk wanting to be useful but aware of the onset of physical frailties! Seeing, hearing, savouring smells and taste may now give us problems, the suppleness of our bodies may be diminishing, our fading memory may also be becoming a problem.

Joan Chittister, an internationally known Author and Lecturer, however, suggests all new and exciting possibilities for us. In the time ahead she challenges us to trust in our life-giving God, as we strive to enrich the lives of others, make time to reflect and ponder and pray for those living in deplorable conditions in our world, and listen to others in their joys and sorrows.

As we grow older we need to slow down, enjoying a certain serenity rather than counting our losses.

Chittister's whole book is full of positive ideas, "being grateful for joyful memories, for people who have encouraged us, for useful lessons although sadly learnt, for warm insights".

There is a vitality and yet tranquility about Joan Chittister's writing that must come from her love of God and the beauty of all His creations, from trusting in Jesus our Saviour, and in the comforting Holy Spirit.

Her book deals with forty topics, each with a one word heading e.g. Fear, Future, Transformation, Regret, Loneliness, Agelessness, Fulfillment and many more.

She presents us with new thoughts, for *The Gift of Years* is about "new beginnings, embracing the blessings of this time and overcoming the burdens."

She ends the Introduction with the following statement, "But the gift of these years is not merely being alive - it is the gift of becoming more fully alive than ever."

Don't miss the Afterword that completes the book. It is most heartening!

*Submitted by Moyra Jones [and printed in October 2016] - always worth a repeat!!*

**THE BOOK THAT MADE YOUR WORLD**

by Vishal Mangalwadi

This book, subtitled 'How the Bible created the soul of Western Civilization', brings an Indian writer's perspective on the effect the Bible has had on what we call 'the west', positing that without it, the west would be as backward and morally bankrupt as the rest of the world. Mangalwadi further suggests the rise of secularism is bringing with it the risk that the west will slide into the same state as the rest of the world.

Mangalwadi opens with a look at music and its creators beginning with Kurt Cobain and harking back to Bach, noting the rising hopelessness of the younger generation as expressed in its music's lyrics. He uses this as an indicator of the state of the soul of civilisation. However, he does not focus exclusively on western music or culture

but goes on to compare it with that of other cultures. V.M. then goes back to speak of his own experiences as a volunteer working with the poor of India and some of the terrible scenes he has encountered.

V.M. uses some interesting exchanges and quotes to highlight the issues. Quotes from George Orwell, among others, to show he is not restricting himself to a Christian echo chamber, and others from personal life such as one in which he was discussing Islamic women's dress with a Muslim who thought westerners were immoral because they exposed their women. He says a friend joined the conversation to say that this dress code was because he (the Muslim) could not trust his brother or cousin and even his wife. This 'trust' issue appears also in the discussion V.M. had on a flight with a Pakistani who noted that business was easy in Britain because everyone trusts you; you don't have to employ a battery of people to ensure others are not taking advantage of you as would be necessary in the subcontinent.

V.M. then engages in what he calls a personal pilgrimage through all the aspects of life noting the Bible's influence on these. Topics covered include 'Service', one's purpose in life, the self, humanity, rationality, technology, heroism, the flow of knowledge from east to west, languages, literature, education, science, morality, family, compassion, 'True Wealth', liberty, globalising modernity, and the future. This demonstrates how great an effort he has made to look into all aspects of life. While he accepts that many evil things have been done in the name of Christianity, he fears that its loss will only result in much worse.

All in all a really good look at the influence the Bible has had on our lives. If one is interested in this – whether you're Christian or not – I think you need to read this book.

*Submitted by Karl Tietze*



Recently, I saw a book advertised that sounded interesting and while I doubt I would buy it, I found the content a little intriguing. It listed what the authors felt were the 8 characteristics of rapidly growing churches. While I appreciate we are not “rapidly growing”, and I am always a bit sceptical of books like this that claim to have all the answers, it is always worth looking at what they say as there is usually something you can adapt to your situation.

Here are the chapter headings, or the eight characteristics:

- *Believe in miracles and act accordingly*
- *Integrate new people quickly*
- *Love the local*
- *Exist to reach the next person*
- *Elevate the practice of giving*
- *Work in teams*
- *Preach effectively to sceptics*
- *Make friends with the denomination.*

How do you think your congregation measures up?

*Graham*

## 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  
 5.30-7.30      Year 6 Youth Group P1

#### *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  
 .....      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,  
                          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

#### *Saturdays*

9.00 am      Prayer Meeting: 2nd Saturday of month

### MONTVILLE

#### *Daily*

10 am – 3 pm      Reflection Gallery

#### *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

### PALMWOODS

#### *Sundays*

10.00 am      English Worship Service held weekly  
 1.00 pm      Tongan Worship Service held weekly  
 10.00 am      Combined Service held on 2nd Sunday of the month with Holy Communion

#### *Daily*

8.00 am      Soil and Soul Community Garden open every day.  
                          Prayer in the Soil and Soul Community Garden

### OTHER MEETINGS

Pastoral Care: Quarterly in February, May, August and November at Maleny,  
                          Dorothy Tietze 5494 2486

Church Council: A new Church Council across the cluster to be formed in 2019

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