



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, grandar@bigpond.net.au

Issue No. 12, SPRING 2019

EDITORIAL COMMENT

Each edition of this journal brings questions - sometimes they are answered and sometimes not.

I mean – this edition heralds Spring. What should be raised about this season? In the northern hemisphere, Spring and Easter coincide and there is the theological environment of resurrection and new life. But what about in Australia? What does spring mean theologically here, especially in our sub-tropical climate?

And then the day on which the journal becomes available is Fathers' Day. What should be raised about this special day? Anything? Why is it special? Is there some theological background to this celebration or is it simply a commercial exercise? Or are we just trying to achieve gender balance with Mothers' Day?

Should these subjects be focused on specifically; mentioned only in passing; or ignored?

And, as always, there is a fifty-fifty chance that whatever you decide will not be acceptable to some readers. That's life I guess.

Sometimes it feels all too hard, so we go in a different direction altogether – like this time. There's a focus on grand parenting [I couldn't resist asking permission to use the photo below when I saw it on the lounge room wall] and other items referring to aspects of our faith and lives. Hopefully it will all serve a useful purpose.

But back to what is contained herein.

I would hope there is some challenge here for us to think a little more deeply, perhaps, on our roles as grand parents – look at what some of our friends have said and see how we relate to it. Consider if there are any things we might be able to do to somehow support our grand children. Can we become surrogates in some ways for children who have no grand parents? Is it possible for us to respond to any young people as though they are our grand children?

It would be my hope that we might each find it possible to spend a little time in quiet reflection on what is happening to young people in our society, including the church, and as part of that exercise think and act outside the box or normal or usual responses. Do something radical. Set the town talking. Help the Kingdom come.

May God continue to bless you all.

Graham



INDEX

Editorial Comment.....	Page 1
Who's Who in the Blackall Range Churches	2
A Word or Two from Bruce	3
Trinity College Courses.....	4
A Reflection on a Reflection on a Reflection.....	5-7
Kids' Rids	7
An Interesting Insight.....	8-9
Fathers' Day and Humour	10
Act for Peace Call for Churches to help the World's Poor at Christmas	11
Salute to the Class of 20 June 2019	12
Karl's Korner	13
Grand Parenting.....	14-20

WHO'S WHO IN THE BLACKALL RANGE CHUCHES

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One Church Council: Peter Callaghan (Chair); Merilyn Milton (Secretary); Peter Uhlmann (Treasurer); Bob Eather and Amity Green (Maleny representatives); Duncan Drew and Rev George Woodward (Montville representatives); and Karis Ross and Mele Lolohea-Cameron (Palmwoods representatives).

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

A WORD OR TWO FROM BRUCE

Grand-parenting Disciples

A common concern I have heard within the Uniting Church in recent years is that we are losing our young people. Many of us grew up in the days when Sunday Schools were alive and busy with children. If you wander around older Uniting Churches you will see many Christian Education centres that were opened in the 1950s and 60s. With such a vibrant Christian Education program we felt that the future of the church was assured as we faithfully taught the faith to our children. So why when all those young people became adults do we not see them and their children filling our churches? What were we doing wrong in those overflowing Sunday Schools that they didn't produce adult disciples of Jesus?

There may be many things we could learn by reflecting upon that experience, but today I want to invite you to think about how we "oldies" can contribute to forming faith in our grandchildren, especially if their families don't participate in the life of the church.

One of my daughters-in-law grew up in a family that had almost nothing to do with the church. However she was very close to her grandmother who was a faithful Catholic. Occasionally she would go to Mass with her grandmother and this caused her to insist that her family should go to church at Easter and Christmas. Like most young people, while she was at University she gave serious thought about her life, its purpose and the values that would shape it. One day an invitation to an Alpha Program from the local Uniting Church appeared in her letterbox. Remembering fondly the faith of her grandmother, my daughter-in-law decided to go along and find out more about the Christian faith. Her faith in Christ has continued to grow.

Something I have found intriguing in recent years is listening to grandparents lament the lack of faith in their grandchildren. They would love their grandchildren to become Christians but see little interest in "coming to church". They go on to talk about how proud they are that their grandchildren are going on an exposure trip with their school helping in an orphanage in Thailand or working with Habitat for Humanity building houses in South America or they have taken a "gap year" to volunteer in a village somewhere in Africa.

I have heard versions of this story so often that I have begun to wonder if God is doing something new. For all of my life we in the Church have believed that disciples of Jesus are made by drawing people into the worshipping life of the Church, then equipping them and sending them out to serve the world in the name of Christ. Has God begun to operate in reverse? Is God's Spirit inspiring young people to go and serve others, giving themselves to love and care for those far less fortunate than themselves. I hear so many young people say they want to "make a difference", instinctively believing they have an obligation to use their privileged position to care for others. Is our task now helping these passionate young people discover that by becoming part of a praying worshipping community they will be sustained in their service.

My concern is that such intense and challenging service will result in "burnout" and cynicism unless it is sustained by a deep relationship with God and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

If my sense is right, how can we "oldies" gently come alongside our young people with affirmation and encouragement? How can we let them know we are surrounding them with prayer and embracing them within our worshipping community? Finding that they are not being criticised or dismissed by the church may lead these young people to begin to value the church they once criticised and dismissed. Maybe the gentle love and understanding of grandparents will be more effective in forming faith than all our evangelical strategies.

Bruce

TRINITY COLLEGE COURSES

Trinity College Qld is running some topical and practical short courses in the next few months. All of these are being held at Trinity College, Auchenflower.

All we have to do is get on the train at our nearest station, and stay on it, until we get off at Auchenflower and then take a short stroll to the venue. We take the reverse to get home.

For further details about these, contact TCQ, 3377 9958.



SACRAMENTAL PRACTICES: Friday, 27 September, (9:30 am to 4:00 pm)

Developing a deep appreciation of the centrality of the sacraments in shaping the way of discipleship is a fundamental aim of this course. The practice of the sacraments informs the rhythm of the Christian life. Therefore, the emphasis of this course will be on the discipleship imperatives in sacramental practices. This creates a basis for understanding the “how” of sacramental practices which this course will also cover.

Suitable for: Lay presiders, Pastors, candidates, worship leaders, elders.

UCA GOVERNANCE AND REGULATORY LIFE: .. Mon 14 Oct, (9.30 am to 4:00 pm)

The governance and regulatory life of the Uniting Church is complex. This short course aims to provide people with a clear overview of, what the Basis of Union refers to as, the “government in the church” and the decision-making processes and functions of this interconciliar community of being. Another significant component of this course will be a foundational understanding of the Code of Ethics and its relation to the regulatory life of the church, especially for Ministry Agents.

Suitable for: POD participants, Pastors, new UCA members, Church Council members, UCA core competency.

CHURCH GROWTH IN MISSIONAL FORMS: Four Thursday evenings, October 10-31

The revitalisation of the church requires exploration of missional forms of church growth. This short course will consider five different expressions of church growth in missional forms. The aim is to assist local Congregations, Presbyteries and Ministry Agents in exploring new possibilities for the church to serve the mission of God.

Suitable for: Mission teams, ministry teams, ministry agents, Church Councils.

WORSHIP BOOTCAMP: Saturday, 26 October, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm

Worship infuses discipleship with a tempo that influences our walk with Christ. This bootcamp will be inspiringly experiential and theological, rich in understanding why worship has always been, and always will be, central to Christianity. It will focus on empowering individual and collective worship in ways that contribute to the revitalisation of the church.

Suitable for: Worship leaders and teams, Lay Preachers, ministry agents, elders, You?

A REFLECTION on A REFLECTION on A REFLECTION

Every so often something arrives on my computer that causes me to stop and reflect on what appears on the screen – be it written words, cartoons, photos, music, videos – you name it. Usually, it is not something I have sought or am looking for – it is gift, sent by someone else – out of friendship, information sharing, sheer nuisance, sadness, curiosity at my possible response, joy – a whole variety of reasons. But it pulls me up with a jerk and I pay somewhat closer attention than I would normally do and possibly a little more than the sender envisioned.

That happened recently and I have chosen to share that moment.

It came in the form of the August Newsletter of/for the Friends of the Reflection Gallery.

The Reflection Gallery is an engaging activity of the Montville congregation. Its purpose is to offer a sacred space for people to rest their spirits and find refreshment. This is done by having works by Christian artists hung in the church throughout the year and having the church open every day for passersby to enter and experience something to reflect on.

Visitors find a brief biographical statement about the artist in the foyer and inside, a number of artworks with an indication of how the work came to be and/or a brief biblical passage to accompany it. Both word and picture go together. In reflection, viewers may find encouragement or challenge, an aid to prayer or meditation, a word from God.



All that said, back to what grabbed me.

The gallery's curator had written this:

CREATIVITY

If in every work of art something of the artist is present, it is also true of our own selves for we are surely, each one of us, at least partly God's work of art. The difference is that we are living, personal, relational works in flesh and spirit, not just artistic expression with paint on canvas. Something of God – living, personal, relational - resides in everyone. This can be seen in human creativity. In creativity we reflect something of the Creator. Whether we channel this creativity in ways consistent with God's will and purpose or in opposition to it, is up to us.

Now, there's something to reflect upon, I thought.

I have never before considered myself as being, even partly, God's work of art. I have always understood that there is something of the Creator God in each one of us – but a work of art?

Many years ago I dabbled in oil painting and found I could paint a tree that looked like a tree, and while I was pretty pleased with myself about that, I soon realized I was a painter – not an artist. To me, a painter can reproduce images but an artist expresses something deep from within him/her self in what they produce – something that reflects the spark of the Creator within.

So, for me, if I am partly God's work of art, that deep something of the artist is to be found in me.

So, when I walk into the Reflection Gallery, some questions arise for me:

- What short bibliographical detail about the artist would I put up on the easel in the church foyer?
- What bible verse would I use about me, as a work of God's art?
- More importantly, what verse would the divine artist place beside His picture of me?
- How would a viewer see this work of art – would they find encouragement or challenge, an aid to prayer or meditation, a word from God?

Perhaps there is something there for us all to reflect upon.

But that shouldn't take away the attraction of visiting the Reflection Gallery to see the works on display there throughout the year. The Blackall Range Uniting churches have a number of artists among their number – Ron Potter and Barbara Wilcox from Montville have each had exhibitions – and for the next two months, Jasmine Davies from Palmwoods is the exhibiting artist.

The Newsletter tells us:

Jasmine grew up not knowing the culture of her Aboriginal father. It was when an indigenous artist came to paint a mural at her school that she was introduced both to painting and to her indigenous background. Over the years she has worked with a number of indigenous and non-indigenous artists and has run workshops on indigenous art for schools, child care centres and respite centres and has used her art to help at-risk youth.

Over the past five years Jasmine has been part of the Palmwoods Uniting Church. During services she says that she often finds ideas for paintings flooding into her mind. She jots down a note to remind her of it so that many of the paintings now in the Montville Church are the result.

Some of the titles clearly show their biblical origins: titles like "Jonah and the Whale", "The 10 Commandments", "Palm Sunday" and "The Death of Christ". Others give



Jasmine with her painting "Jonah and the Whale" which is currently on display, with her other paintings, at the Reflections Gallery, Montville

obvious evidence of their indigenous background: “Pipi Shells”, “Whitchetty Grub”. and “Saltwater People” for example.

Above all, Jasmine seeks to give expression to the importance of community, mutual respect and sharing.

It is well worth a visit.

And there was another thing in the Newsletter – in addition to a call to prayer for the Gallery, there was a call for other artists within our churches to offer a collection of their work for presentation.

Ron Potter, the Gallery Curator [5478 6484], would love to hear from you.

And in the meantime, so would the Editor of *The New Vine*, believing, as he does, that we all have a spark of the Creator within us – something that many of us have let diminish over the years – that’s life – but he also believes we can all dust our creativity down and come up with something beautiful. Many do it in wood, fabric, paint of one sort or another, gardening, wool or leather. The options are almost endless.

But for those who love to do it with words, poems and/or stories, I would love to hear from you through something prepared for publication – at any time. grandar@bigpond.net.au will find me.

KIDS’ RIDS

Why is the Mississippi river such an unusual river?

Because it has four eyes and can't see.

When is a piece of wood like a king?

When it's a ruler.

What do you always get on your birthday?

Another year older.

Why don't astronomers like vegetable soup?

They prefer a 'meteor' version.

What do you call a parrot who wears a raincoat during a storm?

Polyunsaturated.

What is even more amazing than a talking dog?

A spelling bee.



This little parrot forgot its raincoat!

AN INTERESTING INSIGHT



Sojourners is the monthly magazine of the American Christian social justice organization Sojourners and features reporting, commentary, and analysis on Christianity and politics, the church and social issues, social justice and Christian living. Articles frequently feature coverage of fair trade, interfaith dialogue, peacemaking and work to alleviate poverty.

The August, 2019 edition contained an article “Dear sisters and brothers in Christ – Letters to the American church from Christians around the world” which I found interesting and, I hope you agree, worth sharing. It follows in two parts – the first explains what the story is trying to achieve; the second comes from Australia.

Copies of the journal are held in the Maleny church’s library. Should you be interested in what other countries had to say, you can borrow the magazine from the library.

Quote:

MUCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT IS ACTUALLY OTHER PEOPLE’S MAIL

Read the ancient biblical letters carefully and you’ll find what still fills envelopes today: thank-you notes, appeals for money, travel updates (paired with excuses for not visiting sooner), and even requests to send along items left behind on previous visits: “When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments,” writes the author of 2 Timothy.

These letters—affectionate, critical, encouraging, or exasperated—also evidence an intimacy among the members of the early church that transcended political borders. Even their frustration with each other points to the kind of crazy-making that only comes from family: “I have been a fool! You forced me to it,” Paul writes to the church in Corinth.

What would it be like if churches around the world still wrote letters like that to each other today? If we’re honest, most Christians in the U.S. don’t have much of a relationship with our global siblings. And to the extent we have communicated with Christians in other countries, we have far too often been the ones talking.

So we invited Christians from around the world to write letters addressed to the church in the U.S.; the subject matter was entirely of the authors’ choosing. We received letters, which we’ve reprinted here, from India, Honduras, Pakistan, France, Argentina, Kenya, South Africa, and the Wakka Wakka nation in Australia. Like the New Testament epistles, they offer a mix of pastoral advice and prophetic challenge—and a window into the global body of Christ. —The Editors.

DEEP WOUNDS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN DEALT WITH

Galangul allara! G’day in the Wakka Wakka language! Wakka Wakka nation, my country, is one of more than 300 nations of Aboriginal peoples in the ancient lands now called Australia. Science says our peoples have been here for more than 65,000 years. We say our peoples have always been here, since time immemorial.

I recently had the privilege to visit your ancient lands. In this visit I was honoured and shown hospitality on a scale I have never received in Australia. I say thank you.

As I stood barefoot and connected with your land, I was troubled. I felt the same disturbance pulse from the land as when I do this in Australia. I could feel the land was unsettled. I could

hear the land weeping and screaming. I could see the land was tired. These are the deep wounds of colonization, dispossession, racism – a true history that has not been dealt with. While I was in the U.S., I found that your Indigenous peoples, just like Indigenous peoples in Australia, somehow become invisible. How is this possible when we are not invisible to the Creator? Creator has always seen us, created in the image of God, as Creator's appointed custodians. Invisibility is another deep wound.

Your wounds are more than 500 years old, and our wounds are more than 230 years old.

The healing of deep wounds requires humbleness, prayer, and action. Are Australia and the U.S. ready to humble themselves? Ready to walk in truth, friendship, and prayer with their Indigenous brothers and sisters? Ready to challenge the "American story" and the "Australian story"?

Scripture says, "If my people, who are called by my name, humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Friends, the time is now! Too many centuries have passed; let us not let one more day pass! Our lands, waters, and all peoples need healing. Let us sit in ceremony together on these ancient lands with the healing smoke—the smoke of the burning sage that rises from your lands to the smoke of the burning (eucalyptus) gum leaves that rises from mine.

My prayer echoes the calls from Indigenous Lakota theologian Richard Twiss: "So really what we would hope for is that the church would see us as co-equal participants in the life, work, and mission of the church, not [as] the perpetual mission field of the church." My prayer and hope for the nation of Australia is that we the peoples will build an Australia on truth, justice, love, and hope. It's my same prayer for the world. The church in the U.S. is part of that prayer and hope.

Will you, in the words of Indigenous Mi'kmaq-Acadian theologian Terry Le Blanc, "look into the voices of Indigenous theologians and hear the voice of God anew"? The time is now!

Brooke Prentis

Wakka Wakka nation (Queensland, Australia)

Co-ordinator of the Grassree Gathering, a network of more than 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian leaders.

There are 574,000 Aboriginal Australian Christians (73% of the Aboriginal Australian population)

I found this article thought provoking – particularly the plea for the church to see Aboriginal people as co-workers for Christ and not as the perpetual mission field. I wondered if it might be a reasonable topic for discussion in some of our bible study and other groups at some stage, especially given the wider community conversations on the Uluru Statement from the Heart?

How much of the Aboriginal struggle and story do we really understand? I looked up both Brooke Prentis and Grassroots Gathering on the web and found that an interesting exercise too. I recommend it to everyone.

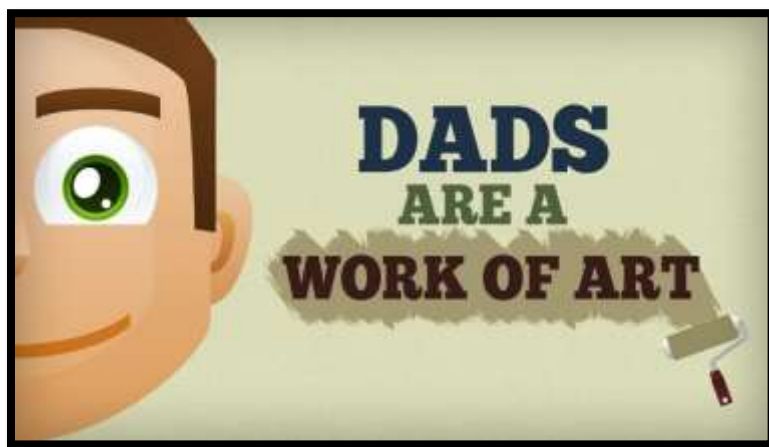
Graham



Brooke Prentis who visited our Maleny Church in May 2015

FATHERS' DAY AND HUMOUR

I have been encouraged by some readers to say something about Fathers' Day given it is celebrated so close to the publication date of this edition. This urging, together with the material on the Reflection Gallery, pointed me towards this image!



In addition, some folk have pushed me to have more humour in the pages – and strangely, I found these jokes attributed to Fathers' Day, so in some places around the world, they must be seen a jokes made by fathers. Apologies in advance! But, here goes.

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Justin.

Justin who?

Justin time! I thought you weren't home

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Isabel.

Isabel who?

Isabel working? I had to knock

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Freeze

Freeze who?

Freeze a jolly good fellow

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Little Old Lady.

Little Old Lady who?

Wow! I didn't know you could yodel

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Dwayne.

Dwayne who?

Dwayne the bathtub,
I'm dawning

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Sarah.

Sarah who?

Sarah doctor in the house?

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Police

Police who?

Pol-e-s-e open the door

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Radio.

Radio who?

Radio not. Here I come

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Nunya

Nunya who?

Nunya business

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Wooden shoe.

Wooden shoe who?

Wooden shoe like to know?

Knock knock.

Who's there?

Amos.

Amos who?

A mosquito bit me

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Boo

Boo who?

Don't cry – it's only a joke

ACT FOR PEACE CALL FOR CHURCHES TO HELP THE WORLD'S POOR AT CHRISTMAS



Taken from *Insights Magazine*,
the monthly magazine of the Synod of NSW and ACT, Aug 05, 2019

Act for Peace is calling for Christians of all denominations to support the 70th anniversary of the annual Christmas Bowl appeal, which supports people fleeing conflict and persecution worldwide.

The fundraiser launched in Australia in 1949 to support for refugees after WWII. Over 70 million people have been uprooted from their homes since then because of conflict and disaster. That's one in every 108 people globally currently displaced – the largest number since records began.

Act for Peace Hannah Montgomery said that the organisation was “calling on Christians of all traditions to respond to this injustice and come together to raise urgently needed funds to help our brothers and sisters around the world who are suffering.”

More than 1,300 churches from 15 denominations across Australia took part in 2019. They raised \$2.3 million to support disaster and conflict affected communities around the world.

The Christmas Bowl appeal began as a simple idea – to place a bowl on the Christmas dinner table and make a donation to those less fortunate. The first Christmas Bowl raised £1,808 – a large sum for a congregation at the time. Churches have since raised more than \$100 million through the Christmas Bowl.

Act for Peace is the international aid agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia. It works with local organisations in over 20 countries across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the Pacific, providing food, shelter, education, healthcare and training to help some of the world's most vulnerable communities.

To register your church for the Christmas Bowl and receive a resource kit visit the official website. (www.actforpeace.org.au/Christmas-Bowl).

SALUTE TO THE CLASS OF 20 JUNE 2019

It was a privilege to lead such a thoughtful, well behaved (mostly!), empathic and fun loving group of “girls” at the June meeting of the Maleny Ladies’ Friendship Group. The morning began and ended with the clanging sound of a school bell and “Good morning” chants.

The theme of “School days” evoked so many memories as we revisited the time spent at school in our early years. Long forgotten feelings surfaced relating to learning to read and write, maths, geography and history. As well, recollections about regular Scripture lessons as part of the school routine and teaching methods in general – a lot of rote work – reminded us how different it is for children in schools today.

Phonics charts, good manners charts, maps, early reading books, sewing samplers, many old photos, an “apple for the teacher” and even a uniformed school girl “look-a-like” emerged and were exclaimed over.

The unaccompanied singing of “God Save the Queen” and “School days, school days, good old Golden Rule days” was a credit to the innate musical ability of this voluntary class.



[Rumour has it that these students were kept in after school!]

We prayed for all the children in our lives now and the challenges they currently face.

Presentations of portraits of our young Indian friends were appreciated.

Thank you to all those who attended and participated, shared heartfelt stories, brought along treasured memorabilia and laughed together.

We reluctantly wished “our girls” a safe return to their present lives.
Thanks for being such good sports!

Sincerely, your “teachers”,
Mrs Robertson, Mrs Wilson and Mrs Richards

KARL'S KORNER

The Modern Grandparent?

Like many people these days, my grandchildren live far away from me and are absorbed in their studies and hobbies. So, I have rare contact with them and, when I do, they seem buried in their technology. I long to give them advice or support them in their education but you can't put an old head on young shoulders, so they say, and so my efforts fail.

Also I find it hard to empathise with their worries because the world has changed so much since I was in their situation. School never stressed me out (was there such a phenomenon except when one didn't know something in an exam?), or was I just "different"? Why did I not have homework almost every night? – Or was that just because I did mine between periods at high school while others "mucked up" – "socialised"? (the "serious" German?).

And society has changed to be almost alien to what I remember – what with FOMO, "Selfies", "Status Updates" and how many "Likes" you got on Facebook. On the other hand, perhaps my grandchildren have "inherited" some of my traits since I only knew one grandparent who lived in Germany. I go to an activity of U3A (University of the Third Age) at which people come and present talks on various subjects dear to them, and a chap came and told us about genograms – a sort of family tree with added notes on mental illnesses and character traits and defects (noted by criminal convictions, etc.) – and how these problems seem to propagate down the tree.

Cat Stevens wrote a song called "Cats in the Cradle" which suggested the son grew up just like his father, and perhaps that goes for grandchildren too, perhaps diluted along the way. The Bible in several places (Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy) suggests that the sins of the "fathers" will be visited on the descendants "unto the third and fourth generations". It causes me to pause and reflect on my own defects and what can be done to remedy this phenomenon in my grandchildren.

Taking a wider view, to what extent is my upbringing and the culture I come from impressed on my character in my childhood and thus passed on to my descendants? And is that why we find it so hard to empathise with those of other cultures?

What do you think?

Karl Tietze



GRAND PARENTING

Have you ever heard it said that there is no such thing as grand parents within the Christian faith?

That sounds a bit strange, but in a way it is true. What is really being said, is – Christian faith is not inherited. From a child's perspective, this means that just because our grand parents, and/or our parents, are/were people of strong faith, does not ensure that we will be too. And vice versa, the fact that we are people of faith does not mean our children and their children will become practicing Christians too.

Faith is personal.

But if we take one step to the side and look at Christian grand parenting from the perspective of what it may actually mean to us, I wondered what we might find. So, I asked a number of people to let me know, so I could let you know, what grand parenting meant to them.

The simple question was – What does grand parenting mean to you?

I thank those who responded. Here is what I learned: Graham

CONFESSIONS OF A "WOULD BE" GRANDPARENT

Modern society with its diversity and time constraints does not allow as much opportunity for grand - parenting as in former years, or at least that is my opinion.

What grand - parenting means to me is set against the background of seven biological and three surrogate grandchildren and the group comprises six girls and four boys and ranges in age from fifteen to twenty-five years.

Background to this discussion is that I never knew any of my grandfathers, as they had passed on fairly early, and the one grandmother I did have was a feisty small cockney woman and I was too young to appreciate the cultural attitudes she shared with us.

Into this mix, bring the wonders of the technological age my children and grandchildren have access to and sometimes communication occurs on different levels, with sources of information that I never dreamed of having.

Trying to keep in touch is my main aim, and while doing this, not to be judgmental about things they see or do that are different from my perspective.

Remembering birthdays with a gift, (usually money) and a 'phone call is a way of doing this.

We have some interesting conversations about study and life in general and I have to keep up with new ways of expressing how we feel about music, films, and food.

Some pleasurable aspects of grand - parenting are when we are able to attend productions they may be involved in, anything from ballet to circus. Added to these are speech nights and graduations.

Shared travel and camping are other areas where relationships have been deepened and involvement has brought mutual benefits. Examples have been trips to National Parks such as Girraween and the Warrumbungles and days spent together on a narrow boat in England.

In all this there is still the opportunity to bring them before God in prayer, and the final outcome I leave to the Parent and Creator of us all.

Bob Philpot

THE HONOUR OF BEING A GRAND-PARENT

Delphia and I are blessed with seven grand-children and one great grand-child. Our grand-children, four girls and three boys, range in age from 29 years to 12 years. It seems odd that they are categorised as “children” but they would understand and wouldn’t mind, really.

For a brief three years in the early 1990’s, we lived in Sydney and for the first time, had ready access to our eldest two grand-daughters. We welcomed every precious opportunity to participate in their early childhood years. We have valued memories of their growth and development in their formative years and we delighted in playing our role that was to indulge their every whim and then to hand them back to their parents when they exercised their assumed prerogative to become demanding, wee tyrants.

We were reminded of reality when we assumed the dual role of parents and grand-parents during a brief overseas holiday, taken by their mother and father.

We retired to live in Flaxton, in 1996. Our daughter’s children continue to live in Sydney and our son’s children are presently living in Canberra. We take every possible opportunity to maintain personal contact and happily for us, this resolve is reciprocated. We are yet to meet, personally, our great grand-daughter who was born in May 2019. We will visit Sydney shortly and in the meantime, we are favoured by reports, photographs and video clips.

Being a grand-parent has been, and remains, a wonderful journey for us. We have delighted in every achievement and commiserated in the very few and minor reverses that each grand-child has encountered. In return, our role and status have been embraced, most of the time. We have relished the opportunity, now a fading memory, of watching each grand-child’s favourite TV programme, stage production or film, in their precious company. We have, more recently, experienced the excitement of each one’s achievements in the sporting arena, at school, at university, in marriage and in chosen career pursuits.

*Being a grand-parent is a blessing unique,
Grounded in “I Spy” riddles and jokes.
God’s blessings continue – they’re strong, never weak,
Mature now, foundations secure, life’s wheel has all spokes.*

Delphia and Colin Brewer

THOUGHTS ON GRAND PARENTING

My grandparenting experience began about thirty-six years ago when a daughter married a widower with two little boys. Subsequently they had two daughters together. However, because they lived at a distance, this plus my local responsibilities sadly limited opportunities for physical interplay to mainly Birthday and Christmas interchange.

However when my second daughter and her husband, living locally, started their family, t’was a different experience. Frequent contact led to a much closer bonding. This had a very positive effect and proved a real blessing when my husband died. Thanks to my local daughter and her husband, I was able to share so much of the children’s development and have been incorporated into their families so that I still participate in the activities of my great-grandchildren.

When my son married and also came to live locally I enjoyed a close relationship with the boys who are currently in Brisbane for further studies.

Grandparenting has been such a blessing and a privilege and proximity has been a real bonus for me.

Merle Duggan

GRANDKIDS ARE A GIFT FROM GOD

The frame of the photo standing beside my pillow carries the inscription “Grandchildren are the crowning glory. Proverbs 17.6”. How true. What God given gifts are grandchildren and the 11 in my photo are no exception. What a privilege to be their Grandpa.

With tongue in cheek I have told our kids that it has been worth having children to get grandchildren. In return they have chastised me regularly with “Now Dad, you can’t let them do that!” To which I have responded “Just you watch me - and remember how much you enjoyed similar leniency from your grandparents taking the beautiful role of good cop while Mum and I had to play bad cop at times. It’s my turn now to smell like a rose!” Then we would all have a laugh – especially the grandkids.

However for Christian grandparents, the privileges carry with them serious responsibilities. Now I no longer have Annette, my highest priority after my personal relationship with God is to be a godly parent and grandparent. My race is almost run but how wonderful to be able to invest in the lives of 12 to 24 year olds whose lives will impact our world for many years to come.

In the midst of rugby, soccer, basketball, netball, hockey, fencing, debating, dancing, singing, plays, orchestras, camps, youth groups, church services and grandparent and open days, there is always time to listen to their stories and to share with them some of my experiences – including my walk with Jesus – and what greater joy than next month to be at the adult baptism of the 8th of our grandchildren to enter in to the kingdom of God.

My grandkids know that I pray for them every day by name and that their specific challenges at that time are committed to God. I see this as a privilege but also my responsibility as a grandparent. However it is not a one way street. Though I see them regularly, I also try to stay in touch in between. Many of you know that I am not a big fan of mobile phones which I see tightly clutched in almost every young hand I pass on a city street or join in a lift or train. But with their help I have managed to turn the technology to my advantage to be in contact with the grandkids - and it goes both ways.

Today as I began to frame my thoughts to write this short article, the following unsolicited text message arrived from our eldest granddaughter who at the beginning of the year moved to Perth with her husband who is studying medicine; “Grandpa, Ben and I are thinking of you and praying for you. We miss you. We are out tonight but can we call tomorrow night for a chat. We love you very much. Georgia”

Tonight while I was typing this article another unsolicited text arrived from 20 year old Josh “Hey Grandpa, heard you were a bit sick. Praying heaps for healing and rest. Josh”

What joy! We try to be a blessing to them but what a blessing our grandkids are to us!

In closing, I am conscious that there are some kids who do not have grandparents, some of us who do not have grandkids – or whose grandchildren are far away – and some grandparents who are called upon to be parents. We need to pray for those we know who are not blessed as many of us are. And also to pray for chaplains and for the mentoring programmes in our schools which are so valuable both for the students and for the adults who are supporting them.

Bob Grice



WHAT BEING A GRANDPARENT MEANS TO ME

"A grandchild fills a space in your heart that you never knew was empty." (Author unknown)

How true! Being introduced to our first grandchild was quite an overwhelming experience! Standing in the hospital holding this little one day old bundle, with all the promises of new life, new beginnings, a new generation; the sense of thankfulness that he had been delivered healthy and well; my immediate sense of love for and responsibility to him; and to top this all off, the realisation that the little boy we had raised and nurtured to adulthood, was now a Dad in his own right! It was a bit of a struggle to take it all in, in those first few moments!

Although we knew the triplets were coming, it was such a relief when they arrived safe and well, were good sizes, and did not need intensive care! What a blessing!



One morning at around day ten, I found myself in a quiet corner of the hospital nursery holding all three of them at once for the very first time. Out of the blue I became quite emotional, to the point of a few tears, as the realisation dawned that these were actually my grandchildren, that we belonged to each other, and my heart was overwhelmed with awe, thankfulness, wonder and love. So glad no one was around!!

"Just when I thought I was too old to fall in love again, I became a grandparent!" (Author unknown)

I think one of the overriding thoughts for me as a grandparent is the sense that the family line will continue, that our family history will be remembered and built on, that family stories and characteristics will continue long after I am gone. Having been involved in compiling our family history, I have enjoyed knowing where I have come from, and the struggles and

accomplishments of my ancestors help me to know and understand who I am and where some of my personality traits may have come from.

This, however, also brings a great sense of responsibility on my part. To show my grandchildren, by words and example, the values we aspire to such as honesty, integrity, good manners, discipline, caring for others. To share with them the knowledge of Jesus, and my faith in Him, in the fervent hope that they will one day make their own decisions to follow Him. To show them unconditional love, with the hope that they will see me as a rock in their lives, a rock who is reliable, non-judgemental, loving, comforting and wise. A rock they can come to whenever they need to, for as long as I am on this earth.

As the saying goes, being a Grandparent is my reward for being a parent! I can now relax and enjoy my grandchildren, spend time with them, pour heaps of love into them, cuddle them more than I should, give them that extra treat, have long chats..... and still get a good night's sleep!! I am so enjoying watching them grow and seeing their individual personalities start to develop. There are exciting, and probably challenging, times ahead!!

Sue Callaghan

BEING A GRANDMOTHER

I was surprised when, exactly 3 years ago, I learned I was going to be a grandmother. It wasn't something I hankered for. In fact it was none of my business whether or not my children have children of their own. It is entirely their decision and I have no right to put pressure on them.

I was extremely honoured to be asked, by my daughter-in-law, to come to Canberra and help out when Billy, our grandson, was born. I'm not a 'doting' grandmother although I love Billy very much and like to be involved in whatever he is doing.

I see the role of grandparents as supporting the parents in the difficult job of raising resilient, independent and caring individuals. Parenting is hard enough without feeling the condemnation of critical grandparents who think that they are not doing good enough.

One of my favourite pastimes is browsing the children's section in bookshops. As a result, we have a great collection of excellent children's books, some of which are nearly 40 years old. This love of books has been passed on to our children, which is why our son was reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to his son the day after he was born. Billy now 'reads' it to his toys. He has heard it so many times, he knows it off by heart. One thing grandparents can do is provide quality books for their grandchildren and read to them.

Wearing my teacher hat, reading to children is one of the most valuable things we can do to encourage a whole range of different areas of development, besides, it is great fun and forms lifelong bonds with the child.

As I considered the role of grandparent, I had brilliant role models in my own parents. They were always interested in our children and ready to listen to them, play with them and pray for them. Even though we spent all of our children's childhood at least a day's drive from my parents, they still formed a strong bond with their grandparents which continues today. Our son will ring his 91 year old grandfather and 'have a chat' about world politics, theology and any other topic that takes their fancy.

I hope when I am that age, my grandchildren value me and my wisdom as much.

Heather Johnson

THE FUN AND JOY OF THE LITTLIES

How blessed our lives are by interaction with our 6 treasured grandchildren..5 boys and 1 little girl!

From arms stretched out, to running hugs, a quiet hand in ours, to a bemused grin - their love is totally encompassing and unconditional. We are fortunate to be involved in their school, church, sporting and community activities and in grandparent and musical occasions.

What a joy to be greeted in ways individual to each young personality!

Inside our home smiling faces grace every flat surface! We value every stone, feather, painting or flower found or created by them. It's amazing how the life of a gladwrap roll, discarded walking stick, caterpillar infested palm frond or oven glove can be transformed!

Music rings out - from piano, recorder, violin, keyboard, tamborine or old cake tin drum..... Sometimes a trumpet or French horn ---- Marching in time is compulsory.

Our back deck encourages observation of avian antics, reports on the school day, discussions on the complex anatomy of various creatures or maybe even the news of a new species discovered in our pond! The backyard rings with laughter, the sound of bilycarts roaring down the driveway, screeches as bikes avoid carefully placed obstacles and the bounce of a ball! Swings are pushed and sticks are shoved into smouldering fires (supervised of course)!

Fruit is picked, potatoes dug and fresh snowpeas rarely reach the intended basket. Riding on the mower progresses to driving the mower and what fun it is to write your name on the concrete with the water blaster.

And then, quiet time with cuddles and hugs, gentle understandings, sharing a favourite or new story, a prayer to thank God for another precious day.

We thank you, God, for our precious grandchildren. What a huge privilege to be able to share, and help to shape, these beautiful young lives

Marnie and Stanley McCallum

GRAND PARENTING A COUPLE OF GENERATIONS BACK

My grandparents belonged to the horse and sulky era. I knew three of them. My paternal grandfather died when my father was a teenager. His occupation was a "carter" and the family lived in the now "upmarket" New Farm. No photos, not much information as was not uncommon then. Except his name: James Murray. So, I was named after him. A story that remains to be told.

My maternal grandfather was a hard-working truck driver, a Rechabite Lodge member: never touched strong drink. Despite the depression years he and his two sons always had constant work- in fact owned two homes in an era when working class people were struggling. Family solidarity.

Both of my grandmothers-in spite of illnesses and hard times- lived into their eighties. As they aged, at different times both of them came to live with us, a family of six. Small house. Makeshift bedrooms. Three generations in one house. Family support!

One was extremely deaf – glandular fever as a child. No fancy hearing devices. Just a lot of patience, note writing, and facial expressions. She communicated with a very composed smile.

My other grandmother was a product of her upbringing in the frugal pre- and post-war years: long hair pulled back in a “bun” – a bit stern. A member of the Temperance League. I can always remember when she was using her breadknife to cut a high-top loaf of bread, she would always ask if we wanted a “half or a whole slice” Careful living! She always took a half. Sacrificial living.

I wonder what my grandchildren will remember of me when they are my age: fifty to seventy years from now.

Murray Robertson

WHAT IT MEANS TO ME TO BE A GRANDPARENT

Peter and I have two granddaughters [12 and 14] and two grandsons [4 and 6]. These young ones are the absolute joy of our lives.

Firstly, our granddaughters, we have loved them, cuddled them, encouraged them, listened to them and played with them all their lives. We have attended school concerts from when they were in Prep. Now both are members of the Concert Band at their school, one is also in the debating and drama groups, whilst our youngest granddaughter is a champion skipper. Skipping was just something you did at lunchtime when I went to school, but it's very different today. She also was asked to play the Last Post at this year's community Anzac Day service in front of about 300 people. She played it almost perfectly and it brought tears to my eyes. We are very proud of them.

Our little grandsons are all action, never sitting still for very long. Climbing absolutely everything, eating nothing green, and just loving spending time with Peter and me. They love it when we take them to a nearby park and they can bring their scooters or their bikes. We watch them climbing into the trees and making up their games, always calling down to us instructions, as to where we are to stand and what our roles are, in the game they are playing. Sometimes they come hurtling down the park's walkway on their bikes to where I am standing, and calling out to them to be careful, coming to a stop just centimetres from me, and as I go to move out of the way saying, “Oh Nannie, I wouldn't run into you 'cause you're too precious”.

So, our grandchildren are just that “too precious” and we are looking forward to seeing them grow into loving and respectful young people.

Thank You Lord for grandchildren!

Merilyn Milton



I had intended to write a concluding paragraph that somehow summarized what these writers said – but really, they speak for themselves, tell their own story, create their own ambience. So, I will finish by simply saying there is, for me, something in all this that talks of God's grace and love. Grandchildren are gift – gift in which we have a wonderful opportunity to see God's love reflected all around us. May we nurture this gift, praise the Giver and create and support an environment in which faith may grow and flourish.

Graham