

THE new vine



UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA
Blackall Range Uniting Churches
(Kenilworth, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods)
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EDITORIAL COMMENT

Let's play hopscotch!

For some reason, I thought it could be useful to try to tell the story of the Blackall Range Uniting church so we could all try to understand a little better what our 3-in-1 church was, and how it operated. Perhaps, it could result in some form of living booklet to be given to new-comers and visitors to tell who we are as part of the people of God's Kingdom on the Blackall Range. So, I wrote to a number of people asking them for contributions – and here is the result.

It is not a sequential, well structured, logical edition but more a patchwork quilt – different fabrics, some colourful, some not; some interesting, some not so much; some small, some not so small; some closely related, others quite disparate in focus; some colours repeated here and there and so on. In fact, I felt the way it all unfolded was a bit like the church we form here.

But it is not something to be read from cover to cover - rather, I suggest we skip from place to place - in no particular order - hence the hopscotch reference.

Apologies for the mixed metaphors.

Anyway, it ended up in two sections really. The first tells some broader related stories while the rest focuses in on our structure and activities. I crave your indulgence as you venture through it all.

But - and here's the exciting part for me – there are over twenty different contributors to this edition. No wonder it has different approaches to our story, and its telling. Who would have thought, no so long ago, that so many of us would put pen to paper, or fingers to keyboard, for any reason what-so-ever. I think that, in itself, is worth celebrating – more than twenty of us telling a little of our journey with God and his people. And that isn't counting those who put it all together.

May we each be encouraged, as we read, to tell that story – the story of our walk with God.

Peace and blessings

Graham



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LIENA'S LINES

*"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth"
(Psalm 46 vs 10)*

Be still. Be quiet. Relax. Let go. As we seek in this edition to discuss and discover our identity as a Uniting Church, may we also step back, retreat and grow still. Then, in the stillness may we reflect and discover something more about God. Listen for God in the stories, search for God in the congregations' activities, find God in our conversations. And may we then not only discover more about the identity of our congregation and the DNA of the Uniting Church, but also something of the greatness of God.

As we celebrate who we are as members of various groups, situated in distinct congregations forming part of the Blackall Range Uniting Church, may we understand more how we form part of a greater whole, the Range Christian Leaders' Network, the Mary Burnett Presbytery and the Uniting Church of Australia. And may we also realise that we are only a small part of an immeasurable global church. May we be filled with gladness and gratitude. And may we be humbled.

Indeed, may we become still and understand that God is exalted among the nations, all the nations and exalted in the earth, the whole earth!

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Shalom
Liena



KARL'S KORNER

The "Evangelicals"

During 2020 we saw a number of groups raise their heads in support of the then President Trump, and among them was one referred to as the Evangelicals. This purportedly "Christian" group caused bemusement in the minds of some media commentators since several of Mr. Trump's pronouncements seemed incompatible with what they thought Christianity was all about. I, too, found this puzzling and when I encountered several local adherents of various churches who openly supported Mr. Trump, I listened for clues as to why this was so and came to the following conclusions which, I think, bear thinking about.

There are Christians who call themselves 'Bible-believing' and so their outlook on life presumes that everything in the Bible is both true and demanding of unthinking belief. Of course, many such actually believe what certain Bible scholars have extrapolated from the Bible through their own theological and ideological lenses and thus passed on as truth. This process has always been going on since the emperor Constantine called the council of Nicea in A.D. 325 and there have been many reinterpretations by scholars and others over the centuries. One important debate which bears on the issue I'm addressing is whether Christians are bound by the Old Testament and, in particular, the "law", and, if so, how? There was a group called the Cathars – also called 'Good Christians' – in the 12th to 14th centuries who lived along the northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea and who saw the god of the Old Testament as an evil god while that of the New Testament was a good God. Apart from that they had other beliefs which we find false, but they were apparently very 'good' people. Nevertheless, they were slaughtered by church armies for having 'wrong' beliefs.

“What has that to do with Trump et al?” you ask. It seems to me that the 'Evangelicals' fall into the same trap as the then church in two ways. Firstly, they seem to me to regard the Old Testament 'laws' and law-keeping as a duty to which a temporal reward may be attached. In that, they follow the Old Testament themes where the people of Israel and their rulers were rewarded, or punished, according to their obedience to the law (or, at least, the perceptions of the priests or prophets) – a sort of transactional relationship with their God. Such a focus leads to what became known as the 'Prosperity Gospel' where the wealthy church-goer can feel self-righteous – even entitled to wealth. Such people won't have trouble with Mr. Trump's references to 'losers'. Also, they seem to place great store on God's promises to “Israel” explaining their support for Trump's actions in this respect.

Secondly, some of the Evangelicals and their fellow travellers have a fascination with eschatology (the “end times”) and, perhaps because they think about the “time being shortened” (Matt. 24:22) they are happy to see Trump possibly bringing on Armageddon to avoid their own death.

Thirdly, such people also act as though the church should rule the country. To that end, they want civil law to reflect their theological perspectives and interpretations, notably on abortion and euthanasia. They also had that argument about teaching creationism in schools.

So, what was Jesus' teaching about this? Yes, the 'law' was going to still be around irrespective of civil authority (Mat. 5:11-19) but there's no record of Jesus asking to put these laws into the Roman law or indeed complaining about the Roman administration. Indeed, Jesus sets what some would say an impossible standard for us to meet in Matthew Ch. 5 but he does suggest we keep out of the courts. So, why set up 'laws' to drag others into them? To use a metaphor, are the “Evangelicals” driving a Judaic vehicle with a 'Fish' bumper sticker?

There's a deeper issue here too. The disciples and writers of the texts are, in many ways, no different from us in that they 'interpret' what they hear and write what they think was meant. Paul often says he's giving his opinion. So, should we give most credence and authority to the words of Jesus as remembered by the writers or give equal authority to the lot? What do you think?

KARL TEITZE



KIDS' RIDS

What's the difference between a riddle and a bun that is sat on by two elephants?

One is a conundrum and the other is a bun-under-em.

What's the difference between a buffalo and a bison?

You can't wash your hands in a buffalo.

What would a buffalo say to his son as he leaves for work?

Bison.

What would a forgetful skunk say when the wind changes direction?

It's all coming back to me now.



THE MONTVILLE UNITING CHURCH GARDEN

The Montville Uniting Church is in a unique position as it is in the main street of a busy tourist town. In a street of retail shops, the Church can offer a sanctuary through the “Reflections” Art Gallery and the surrounding garden for both visitors and locals. The garden space is no more than a house block yet is an important green space.

The garden at the Montville Uniting Church (formerly The Methodist Church) has developed since the church was built in 1912.



It was very important to us to retain all the established planting especially the Blueberry Ash donated by Merle Duggan, the Camellias, and The Taxodium to name a few. Camellias are a feature of the Montville Town scape and there are mature Camellias around the church carefully chosen by past parishioners. From 1982 until 2018 members of the Anglican Church conducted an annual Camellia festival.

Up to 1991 the grounds of the church had been maintained by Frank Meyer and the minutes of the Ladies Guild in 1974 recorded “The Church grounds were so well kept that it is a pleasure to walk along the paths to Church” From that time, I do recall seeing Graham Hopkins mowing the lawn, However, I am not sure about other garden maintenance at that time.

In 2005, at a congregational Meeting, it was suggested the garden be developed with the assistance of the younger, special needs clients attending the Blackall Range Care Group. Each week this enthusiastic garden group would attend the garden and do weeding, digging beds, planting and mulching. This provided them with a meaningful social connection to others in the community as we have always found that passing people stop to talk about the progress. It was also a learning experience. Native and exotic plants were donated and purchased, and it was

essential that the garden be sustainable right from the start. Apart from bucket watering when the plants went in, we relied on rain fall and there have been many exceptionally dry periods when the garden fended for itself.



The bird bath was made by clients of the Blackall Range Care Group. The two garden seats were donated by Wyn Boon and the Blackall Range Woodcrafters. In 2006 the biblical theme was added to the garden with the use of bible verses painted on metal signs provided by Hooper’s engineering. We

are pleased to now have a third chair constructed by George Woodward using remnant timber from the old Palmwoods Church. There is a Sunday School inscription making it even more special. The garden verses are soon to be reinstated.

In 2010 the Montville Kids Club, supported weekly by members of the Uniting Church congregation, engaged in a mural competition and painted the amenities block at the back of



the church. Following an Open Garden in 2017 at “The Shambles”, the Hunchy Community (Merle Duggan, Kate Stock and Loma Carter) donated left over plants that have also been planted at the Church.

As previously stated, this garden has been planted to be sustainable. There is no irrigation system and water rarely drawn from the Church’s small tank water supply. The garden does not require an employed groundsman but relies on the generous people who mow the grounds especially during summer when the grass grows faster. The lawn is always kept nicely by Jeff Spencer and formerly Daryll Koch. We also acknowledge the care shown by Daryl and Craig Reinke. A recent working bee involved Colin Brewer, Ron Potter and George Woodward as we take steps to enhance the appeal and function of the landscape. The plan is to make seating alcoves and also to make the grounds accessible. Donations of plants are always welcome.

The garden has evolved to include hardy plants that are suited to fairly poor soil conditions. We have enjoyed looking after the gardens since 2006 and have happily donated plants including some purchased as well as our own plants raised from cuttings. The pre-existing mature specimens guided our choices. From time to time, we have purchased compost and, on occasions, fertiliser – but generally it isn’t necessary as the soil has improved organically. The garden is designed to look inviting and loved with the minimum of attention especially over the winter months. Gardens offer a contemplative space that sustains us physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.

The garden at Montville in partnership with the gardens at Palmwoods and Maleny Uniting Churches will hopefully provide a meaningful link between the congregations as well as outreach to the public.

Happy Gardening,

MICHAEL AND KYLEIGH SIMPSON

LET'S LIGHTEN UP A BIT

Irish Investigation

Murphy drops some buttered toast on the kitchen floor. It lands butter-side-up.

He looks at what he has done in astonishment, for he knows it's a law of nature that buttered toast always falls butter-down. He rushes round to the presbytery to fetch the priest. He tells the priest that he thinks a miracle has happened round at his flat. He won't say what it is but wants Father to see it with his own eyes so, he brings Fr Flannagan into the kitchen and asks him what he sees on the floor."

"Well," says the priest, "it's pretty obvious what we have here. Someone dropped some buttered toast, and then for some reason flipped it over so that the butter was on top."



"No, Father, I dropped it and it landed like that."

"Well," Fr Flannagan says, "it's certainly a natural law of the universe that dropped toast never falls butter side up. But it's not for me to say it's a miracle. I'll report the matter to the bishop, and have him send people round, to interview you, take photos, etc."

An investigation of some rigour is conducted, not only by priests of the archdiocese, but by scientists sent from the Curia in Rome. The final ruling is a negative, however. it reads:

"It was certainly an extraordinary event that occurred in Murphy's room, quite outside the normal run of the phenomena. Yet we have to be very cautious before ruling any happening miraculous, ruling out all possible natural explanations. In this case, we have declared no miracle. For it possibly resulted from Murphy's having buttered the toast on the wrong side."



WHAT IS A CONTRANYM?

Single words that have two contrary meanings (they are their own opposites) are known as contranymy. They are quite rare. Here are ten of them:

1. **APOLOGY** .. a statement of contrition for an action, or a defence of one.
2. **BOLT** to secure, or to flee.
3. **BOUND**..... heading for a destination, or restrained from movement.
4. **CLEAVE** to adhere, or to separate.
5. **DUST** to add fine particles, or to remove them.
6. **FAST** quick, or stuck or made stable.
7. **LEFT** remained, or departed.
8. **PEER** a person of the nobility, or an equal.
9. **SANCTION** . to approve, or to boycott.
10. **WEATHER**.. to withstand or to wear away

Can you think of any more?

BOOK REVIEW

Another Gospel? By Alisa Childers

This book offers some insights into the discussion Christians have about the relevance of the Bible in the modern context. Childers obviously comes from what we might call a more “fundamentalist” or “conservative” view of Christianity but finds herself in a study group run by what is called a “progressive” pastor who questions so many of the assumptions people have made after listening to conservative preachers. This causes her to go away and research why she has believed the things she did and, generally, come back more convinced of her initial beliefs than before. You might not come to the same conclusions but it is a wholly worthwhile exercise, particularly if you are going to put your faith 'out there'.

After the introduction, the first chapter is introduced with a quote from C.S. Lewis:-

You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life or death.

For Childers, her faith was tested in this study group which was billed as “comparable to four years in seminary” and would force her to re-examine the foundations of her faith. The class was to last four years but she lasted four months and found it more of an upheaval than an education. She says that the experience reconstructed her faith – that it wasn't the same as before – but she found the “core historic claims of Christianity are true”. After all her research and exploration, she settles on the following eight things Christians must believe:-

- Human depravity;
- God's unity;
- The necessity of grace;
- Christ's deity;
- Christ's humanity;
- Christ's atoning death;
- Christ's bodily resurrection; and
- The necessity of faith.

I found the book very readable and at times challenging. I still have some foibles with Childer's views but not enough to say the book was not worth reading – it is. I recommend it.

KARL TEITZE



FINE COTTON AT ST GEORGE

“Would you like to go to St George to see how a cotton farm works?” seemed a reasonable question at the time.

John Benn, who owned such a farm until the early 2000’s, was keen to take as many of the Maleny men as possible to share his passion for the industry, to have them discover the family farm, and to show them the ins and outs of the wider industry.

Eight men responded positively, so early on Monday morning, 26 April, they set out in convoy from the church – John, Ray Ellemor, Graeme Tosh, Glen Gill, Malcolm Baker, Karl Tietze, Mike Hutton, John Ginty and Roger Smith. John B, Glen and Roger were the “designated drivers”.

The group soon learned that it was a long way to and from St George, but they appreciated experiencing a great deal of the diversity of country living along the way.

The caravan travelled via Somerset Dam to Toowoomba, using the new by-pass road around Toowoomba, to visit the new Wellcamp International Airport and industrial estate [a Wagner development], passing the new marijuana plantation (no free samples) to the modern terminal. The runway is capable of handling Jumbo jets.

This is the developer, and site suggested by them, who, as a response to the COVID crisis, proposed a possible rural quarantine station which they claim they could build in six weeks.

Lunch at the airport was not possible as planned as it was closed for the Anzac public holiday, so the journey to St. George continued via Cecil Plains, Moonie [where lunch was taken at a roadhouse during a petrol stop] and Westmar. On arrival, the group checked into their motels and then had dinner at the Asian Pearl Restaurant.

Tuesday was a day for visiting local attractions. The first stop was David and Andrew Moon’s farm – a very large vegetable growing and state of the art packing facility – including a concentration on growing and processing [dehydrating] garlic. Then it was off to Riversands Winery for a tour led by the owner and lunch. Then something quite different - The Unique Egg Gallery – which is a wonderful display of hand carved emu eggs. The evening was an under the stars BBQ on the banks of the Balonne River at “Bundoran”, the Benns’ cotton farm.



Two ways of visiting a winery

The next day was concentrated on education about farming practices of the area, as the visitors inspected the farm; saw modern picking in action in the morning and older picking and handling in the afternoon for comparative purposes. They also saw hay making practices at work. This, of course, was after lunch at the historic Nindigully pub. More eating was done at a neighbour's place that night as they were fed as much pizza as they could handle, including dessert pizzas [which are highly recommended]. The night finished with the showing of a film – "The history of cotton growing in Australia" – which told the story of one cotton pioneering family.

And then, suddenly, it was the last day in St George which brought a history lesson and morning tea at the historic homestead "The Anchorage"; an interesting visit to Beardmore Cotton Ginney and lunch at Beardmore Dam (St. George's Irrigation Supply Dam), followed by dinner at the Australian Hotel.

It was all downhill from there as Friday brought packing up and returning home through Moonie, Dalby, Cooyar, Yarraman and Kilcoy.



Carved Emu Eggs



The Last Night – firing up to come home

The Story of Cotton in Pictures





Upon reflection, the group enjoyed the experience and were very appreciative of all the planning work put in by John. He provided extensive commentary on all aspects of the development of the cotton industry, from growing to the finished bales ready for shipment to manufacturers – from ground to Gin. The men all better understood how everything in St George is done on a large scale, and residents were an inventive lot, something that comes from being a long way from more populated areas.

RAY ELLEMOR AND GRAEME TOSH



TRAGEDY BRINGING A COMMUNITY TOGETHER

"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."

..... Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor and author of "Man's Search for Meaning"

When Tony, Rebecca, Maddie (a young baby) and I moved to Palmwoods for a fresh start after the sudden death of our second child, Beverley, little did we know that Palmwoods was also going to have more than its fair share of tragedy.

In 2003, when our children were a bit older and we had another young child in Kindy, a local boy Daniel Morcombe disappeared from Palmwoods. He was waiting to catch a bus to go and do some Christmas shopping when a car picked him up and he was never seen by his family again. The poor family was devastated. His twin brother who worked with our daughter at the local IGA had joy snatched from his life. The parents worked tirelessly to try and find him for many years. They turned their energy to preventing such abductions happening to other children by starting programs to educate children. The community rallied behind them and an annual walk for Daniel attracted many supporters. We wore red in remembrance of him and tied red ribbons to our letterboxes.



It was many years later than the perpetrator of this terrible crime was convicted, and Daniel's remains were found. We now have Daniel Morcombe House in Palmwoods which has become a centre promoting safety for children. They turned tragedy into positive action and while they still must suffer every day, they have helped many others live a safer life.

Our state school in Palmwoods and Woombye were fortunate to have the first school chaplain on the Sunshine Coast, Allan Taylor. He was a bundle of energy and love. Known for his work in missions around the world and caring for those in need locally. When tragedy hit the school in 2009 with the death of two twin girls aged five, along with their 60-year-old grandmother from a car accident, it was Allan who supported the family in so many ways. Then later that year Allan and his wife were killed suddenly when hit while trying to help their daughter when her car broke down on the side of the road. It was a huge shock to our community, thousands attended their memorial service. But Allan's work carried on. There are now many chappies on the Coast thanks to his legacy.

When an old tree in the centre of Palmwoods school had to be cut down it was turned into a sculpture embracing children. This became a focus for remembering Allan's work when we held the first World Vision gold coin trail since his death. His work is still being done though the community and I believe that Palmwoods has become a more supportive community because of the way people have responded to tragedy. Searching for hope despite their circumstances. Working together to create a safer, caring environment where people support each other.



Even last year when a little girl died tragically due to very similar circumstances to our own, we were able to come together as a community to support the parents. Being able to share an understanding of grief is a tough road but does bring solace

and comfort. As people of faith, we have a significant part to play in our communities, but we need to earn trust by coming alongside those who are struggling without a hidden agenda, just love.

God will do the rest as long as we are open to His guidance.

And another quote from Viktor Frankl:

"I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart: The salvation of man is through love and in love."

KAY NIXON



FIREBALL OVER CANOWINDRA SHOWGROUND

Having received the charismatic outpouring of the late 70's, I was given the gift of spontaneous intercession and over the years, my acts of intercession have lengthened both the lives, and the quality of lives, of over 30 people. However, had this fireball, which I see as divine intervention, not occurred, I think that number would have been more than 3,000 as there were 7,000 people present on the occasion that several hot air balloons flamed and lit up the night sky at Canowindra Showground.

It happened like this.

My late brother Frank had succeeded in setting up a company called TELSPEC which was involved in teleconferencing and call diversion. Early in his career, in conjunction with an American colleague, he had invented the two-way voice switch, line powered, amplifier which revolutionised long distance messaging and made teleconferencing viable as it eliminated static and feedback, both locally and overseas.

Other telephone innovations he was involved in helped reduce the size of a large PMG building to the size of a four-drawer filing cabinet, with the result much public real estate was able to be sold. All these benefits were reflected in the company having contracts around the world and so, at the time of the high tech "Gold Rush", Frank's shareholding was worth over \$800,000,000.

Our mother had died the year before the event in question, and the family had decided it would like to have some sort of memorial celebration in Canowindra where we grew up. I had seen Mr Clarridge, the local Holden Dealer, talking on TV about the creation of Australia's first ever fossil museum in Canowindra. As mother had indicated, had her life turned out differently, she would have liked to have been a geologist, I thought this could form the basis of our family celebration and perhaps we could somehow examine the geological structure of the district and provide support for the museum in her honour. I suggested Frank should contact Dick Smith and have Australian National Geographic magazine involved.

Fortuitously, Dick Smith was visiting Frank the following day to investigate the possibility of his buying Frank's personal aeroplane, a Citation. While he did not buy the plane, he mentioned the balloon festival at Canowindra which was, at that time, and for many still is, the balloon capital of Australia. He thought this could serve our purposes quite well.

The next week, while at lunch in Paris, Frank overheard a nearby conversation about ballooning so went to the table to ask some questions and found himself talking to one of the leading balloon makers in the world. The rest, as they say, is history.

Frank ordered a balloon, the largest and most expensive ever, and shaped like an eagle – and offered to fully sponsor the upcoming Canowindra Balloon Festival which over 7000 people

were expected to attend. This, he thought, would be an appropriate and permanent memorial to mum.

Subsequently, The Eagle was rolled out on the Friday morning of the festival and was flown throughout the Friday and Saturday, giving Frank his first ever balloon ride.

However, about 14 days before the event, I had received in the mail a very expensive and formal invitation to attend and from then on, my mind/spirit kept giving me a message that just said – “FIRE”. This vision kept repeating itself right up to the day when the special event was to occur.

The invitation spoke of The Eagle being launched above all the other balloons on the oval where a palate of fireworks would be ignited below The Eagle’s basket. This was to be done by Frank’s son Alistair who had been expelled by two of the UK’s most prestigious boarding schools and who was already dependent on drugs.

I did not see a good outcome to all this.

During the afternoon I had flown with Dick Smith in his helicopter ‘Australian Explorer’ to pick up some celebrities from eastern Europe. For the return journey, I gave up my place on the helicopter to make more room, and I came back in Mr Clarridge’s Cadillac.

When we arrived back at Balloon’s Aloft, opposite the Showgrounds, Dick Smith was not there. It turned out he had witnessed The Eagle’s rough landing in a paddock of dry grass and stopped to pick up the passengers. However, the wind that had caused the rough landing continued and increased in intensity with the outcome that The Eagle ignited and burned, and this spread to other balloons. In those days, not all gas cylinders had the safety devices of today, and the spectacle of them bursting into shrapnel would have been horrifying.

So, an act of God disrupted the program.

I was greatly relieved, although everyone else was very disappointed. Subsequently, during discussion at the local hotel the following year, drinkers all agreed with me that an ongoing fireworks program was not feasible. However, I did not tell them about the spiritual connection.

In fact, I never spoke of this to anyone for years – but on my following birthday [50th] Frank gave me a Mercedes Benz – not in appreciation but in generosity as he knew nothing about my vision of “FIRE”.



The Kookaburra that replaced the Eagle

REFLECTING ON THE UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA [UCA] ESPECIALLY ON THE BLACKALL RANGE

Over recent weeks, in its weekly newsletter, the UCA Assembly has been looking at its Assembly Strategic Plan which identifies four key pillars that drive the future work and areas of development needed for the church to move boldly and confidently into the future.

One of these pillars is Identity, encapsulating how we communicate, embody and give witness to who we are as the Uniting Church in Australia and our distinct role in working toward the coming of the Kingdom of God.

It asked the question – What would you say is part of the DNA of the UCA?

Discussion started with an article by Rev Dr John Squires who is currently Presbytery Minister—Wellbeing in the Canberra Region Presbytery. His article was five pages long and, in my view, well worth a read but we don't have the space for it. So, I have summarised it as a catalyst to get us thinking and to see how we reflect these values. I hope you all enjoy it or are, at least, attracted to find out more. Dr Squires said:

“The Uniting Church is part of the one holy catholic and apostolic church – we see ourselves as just one part of a much larger whole. We do the things that other denominations within the church do: we gather for worship, preach the Gospel, care for the needy, witness to our faith, and connect with communities.

We have many organisations that cater specifically for pre-schoolers, school students, people with disabilities, theological students, adult learners, Indigenous people and aged and infirm people. We have chaplains in hospitals, schools, industry, and the defence forces. And we have congregations in many places across the continent.

When we worship, we feel connected with the people of God of all denominations across the globe. When we witness, we bear testimony to the faith shared by Christians of many varieties. When we reach out in service, we act in solidarity with people of Christian faith, people of other faiths, and people of goodwill of any stripe, in our communities and across the globe.

We share in the call to be missional, universal, set apart, and unified, as God's people together. Or in more traditional theological language, we are part of the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic' church.

But we believe that we have some distinctive elements to contribute to that larger whole. Our identity as the Uniting Church in Australia is marked by ten distinctive features.”

He then identified, explored and explained those ten distinctive features which are summarised below. If anyone would like to view the whole article, I am happy to pass it on to them.

- 1 *We are an ecumenical church*
- 2 *We stand in covenant relationship with the First Peoples*
- 3 *We continue to develop as a church in deepening relationship with many cultures and faiths*
- 4 *We are a church which values the ministry of all the people of God*
- 5 *We are committed to mutuality and gender equality in every part of the church*

- 6 *We are a church which deliberately seeks to discern the movement of the Spirit in our midst*
- 7 *We are a church which values integrity and clarity about our ethical standards*
- 8 *We seek to be a church that engages in the difficult discussions with honesty, transparency and hopefulness*
- 9 *We are a church which is strongly committed to justice for all*
- 10 *We are a church that lives, acts, and advocates for a sustainable environmental future*

He invited readers to engage with what he had written knowing some would disagree, find omissions etc and this is partly what led to this edition of *The New Vine* focussing on what we are doing in the Blackall Range Uniting Church.

- How do we reflect these values?
 - What more could we be doing to reflect them more strongly?
 - Are there other things that we could be doing that would flesh out these values?
 - Are there other elements of the DNA of the UCA that we could explore?
- And so on.

Over to you, dear readers. What follows may be a good starting point.

It is an attempt to explain a little of the organisation of our BRUC church – what it does and how it does it. Perhaps it could be tidied up and be used as a reference for new attendees and others. Whatever, I found it an interesting exercise to try to weigh up what follows with what went before.



THE BLACKALL RANGE UNITING CHURCH [BRUC] ORGANISING A CHURCH FOR MISSION

When those involved in shaping the vision of The Uniting Church in Australia thought about how we discern the will of God, they recognised that this happens best in community. While we can all read the scriptures and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit, our individual inadequacies can lead us to strange and unhelpful interpretations. However, as we explore the Bible together and listen to the Spirit and one another, we can usually discover a clearer direction.

For this reason, The Uniting Church in Australia is governed by a series of inter-related Councils. Each Council has its primary area of responsibility, but will also listen for God's wisdom through the other councils. The Basis of Union of The Uniting Church in Australia, (the Church's vision statement) in paragraph 15 says:

The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is supreme in his Church, and that he may speak to it through any of its councils. It is the task of every council to wait upon God's Word, and to obey God's will in the matters allocated to its oversight. Each council will recognise the limits of its own authority and give heed to other councils of the Church, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel.

To many this sounds like "Democracy" but it is intended to be quite different. Discernment in the Church is not about doing what the majority want, but about all of us listening to the Spirit so that we will hopefully do what God wants. So, when a Council of the church makes a decision, rather than ask, "Do I agree with this?" we should ask "What might God be saying to us through this decision?" Councils don't always get it right, but more often than not, they help us grow as disciples of Jesus.

I know of one ageing congregation that decided they would prefer to see more “strollers” than “wheelie walkers” so deliberately chose to allow their younger members to guide the music choices in worship and become more “child friendly” even though it was not what the majority would have preferred themselves. The result was a vibrant growing congregation that was outward looking, touching their wider society in the name of Christ.

So how does this work out in our local situation?

We have three worshipping communities in quite different contexts. They used to each have their own Church Council. However, to comply with the governance responsibilities being imposed by the wider community, we decided that we would join together as one Church Council. While we are technically “One Congregation” we still need each community to be listening to the leading of the Spirit, so we grow more like Christ and serve the community in which we are placed.

Therefore, each centre, Montville, Palmwoods and Maleny, has a Ministry Task Group that will work with our minister to lead their congregation. The Task Groups will also feed information and insights into the Church Council who help with co-ordination and manage the financial, legal and governance responsibilities that are part of any effective organisation. Both the Church Council and the Ministry Task Groups need members who have a desire to see The Blackall Range Uniting Church flourish as a loving community in Christ.

At present the Church Council meets every second month, bringing together members from all three centres. They explore the overall mission in our region and manage the finances and other issues that impact all three worshipping communities.

The Ministry Task Groups meet sometime in between the Church Council meetings looking at the specific matters that impact their life and witness and provide reports to the Church Council so that it is aware of the aspirations of each centre and indicate work that requires wider attention.

I would encourage every member of our churches to be prayerful about their congregation and its leadership teams.

The Basis of Union of The Uniting Church in Australia, (the church’s vision statement) entrusts all its members with important responsibilities:

The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures,...
(Para. 5)

and

The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ’s Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ. (Para. 13)

Don’t leave the well-being of our church to someone else. Regularly read the scriptures, be prayerful, and listen to what the Spirit may be asking of you as a witness to the reign of God in our world. Encourage your church leaders and offer them any insights that you feel might be helpful.

“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.” (1 Corinthians 12:27)

BRUCE JOHNSON [CHURCH COUNCIL CHAIR]

MORE STRUCTURAL MATTERS

Mary Burnett Presbytery

The Mary Burnett Presbytery derives its name from the Mary River and the Burnett River and encompasses the area from Bundaberg/Burnett Heads up in the north down to Mooloolaba along the Sunshine coast and out west to Kingaroy, Wondai and Murgon and incorporates about two dozen congregations.

Several of the smaller congregations have, like us, combined together to form one congregation, and there are a number of faith communities which operate directly under the Presbytery. The Presbytery is also presently working towards forming corridors, encompassing a cluster of congregations (like, the Inland corridor including Murgon, Nanango/Blackbutt/Yarraman, Kingaroy/Wondai and Eidsvold/Gayndah and Mundubbera).

Two committees, the *Standing Committee* and the *Pastoral Relations Committee* oversee the work of the Presbytery, and presently I serve on both. This entails bi-monthly meetings which are usually held in Gympie. The Presbytery is presently seeking a new *Presmin* [Presbytery Minister] as the present *Presmin* Chris Crause (some of you may remember he preached at my induction) is retiring to Western Australia. The *Presmin* is the minister who takes care of, and oversees the ministers within the Presbytery as well as the life of the congregations, and who gives leadership and vision to the Presbytery. I am serving on the joint nominating committee to appoint the new *Presmin* and hopefully this process will be finalised within the next few weeks.



Morning Prayer at Presbytery, 2020, Hervey Bay



3-in-1: Blackall Range Uniting Church

Shortly before I arrived three congregations, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods situated along the Blackall Range resolved to become one congregation, the Blackall Range Uniting Church (BRUC), yet retain their identity as three distinct congregations. What this actually entails I am still trying to work out! However, I have gleaned that administratively we operate as one congregation, in the sense that there's one budget, one church council, one office and one AGM. The church council has two representatives from each centre, plus a chair, secretary and treasurer elected at the AGM from any congregation. And there is one minister and one pastor (.2 placement) appointed as the minister and pastor of the 'combined' Blackall Range Uniting Church. Thus, although I reside in Maleny and Kay resides in Palmwoods, we serve the 'combined' congregation, BRUC. Practically, however, there are three different small congregations, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods, each of which have their own distinct

character and identity, distinct style of worship and activities. Each centre (I tend to call the smaller congregations worships centres, although officially they remain 'congregations') has a Ministry Team or Ministry Task Group which meets independently to discuss and discern any particular activities, style of worship and so on within that particular centre. The 'decisions' of the individual ministry teams are tabled at the BRUC church council for consideration and approval.

This 3-in-1 model of church is invigorating yet challenging. The three congregations are different and distinct in nature and operation. Each has its own worship style and its own understanding of congregational identity – this diversity keeps the minister, pastor and church council on their knees!

Yet we are one!

Shalom, LIENA



THE BLACKALL RANGE UNITING CHURCH [BRUC] AS A CONGREGATION

Historically, Maleny, Montville and Palmwoods congregations have operated as individual congregations in their respective communities. This worked well for many years until more shared and coordinated approaches were needed.

Initially, a Joint Management Committee was established as a representative management group that operated alongside three Church Councils. Over time, this approach became cumbersome and a drain on the voluntary resources of the BR Uniting Churches.

In 2018, a representative Task Group was formed between the 3 Ministry locations. A report to form a single congregation resulted and subsequently accepted by each congregation. In 2019, the Blackall Range Uniting Church was formed with a single Church Council and three Ministry Teams who take responsibility for the day-to-day ministry of the location.

Church Office ministry – The BRUC Church Office located in the Maleny Church building and opens Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Jing Wang is employed as Church Administration Officer and reports to the BRUC Council and Ministry Agent.

Through the BRUC Office, we joyfully assist and support with most general requests about our Worship community. Some of the services provided by Jing include publishing the weekly bulletin called Our Common Life, bookings for hall hire, processing relevant correspondence, supporting the Ministry Agent and Community Pastor, maintaining the Membership list and Directory, providing general administration support to all activities associated with our Congregation.

The Church Administration Officer can be contacted on admin@ourcommonlife.org.au or leave a message on Phone 07 5429 6995.

Hall Hire is available in each location for weddings, funerals and family functions. However, Church family activities take precedence. Hall hire guidelines are available from Jing at the Church Office.

We publish our weekly, online Worship Services and a variety of other information and resources at www.ourcommonlife.org.au

Each Worship Centre has a website too – just add the location, e.g.
www.palmwoods.ourcommonlife.org.au

THE RANGE CHRISTIAN LEADERS' NETWORK

The Range Christian Leaders' Network (RCLN) is a group of local Christian leaders along the Blackall Range. It is an inclusive group and as its name implies, includes various Christian leaders, including chaplains, current and retired ministers, Religious Instructors and lay representatives from congregations. The RCLN meets once a month. The RCLN is a good forum, enabling us to pray for one another, discuss ways of supporting one another, the chaplains and religious instructors. It also arranges ecumenical events such as community Christmas Carols and Easter services. In the past while I had the opportunity to help arrange the Montville Community Carols together with the *Montville Village Association*, the *Anglican Church* and the *Range Church*; as well as the Easter Sunrise service at Montville, both occasions with the *Salvation Army* band. Super events!

The RCLN has in the past few months welcomed new ministers to the Anglican Church (Rev Deb Bird), the Presbyterian Church (Sam Argent) and the Lutheran Church. Personally I find these monthly meetings heartening and the RCLN is hoping to start a tradition of a big Christian music festival, similar to the one held in Toowoomba, and hopefully it will become an annual event on the Range calendar!



RCLN Christmas Carols, Montville, 2020

Shalom, LIENA



GROUPS AT PALMWOODS

Reflection in the Garden

This takes place on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month and is aimed at reaching those not comfortable, or familiar with, traditional worship in church. We meet at the Community Garden, under the shelter and use nature to inspire reflections on the divine. It is designed for all ages and walks of life to feel comfortable to question, discuss and grow in our spiritual journey. Symbols, poetry, readings, music, storytelling and craft may be used in this space. This is held at 3.30pm Sept – April and 3pm May – August.

'Soil & Soul' or Palmwoods Community Garden

This takes place on church land which is leased to the community through the Palmwoods Community & Business Assoc. It is an initiative of the church and the PCBA together. The garden creates a space for the community to come together and grown vegetables, fruit and flowers. It is a place of learning about sustainability and being custodians of creation. There are Working Bees, Educational Workshops and times of fellowship such as Growing Together once a month where a meal is shared after doing some work in the garden. It has become a place of healing, friendship, care and support. Some produce is made available for helping the homeless or struggling, flowers are given to those needing some cheer. Other groups such as Compass (for adults with special needs), Kindy, Schools, Psychologists and Scouts make use of the facility. There is now an Indigenous Garden being prepared with native plants and Bush

Tucker and a Pasifika Garden for our Islanders to use and teach others. It is much more than a Gardening Club as a number of people attending now regularly come to church and Reflection in the Garden. The relationships made have allowed deeper conversations about faith with people estranged from the church and given our faith community a positive profile of being generous, accepting and caring in the community of Palmwoods and beyond.

Sundale Garden Village

Our church has a significant presence in the local retirement village and hostel. A Bible Study Group is held there and regular pastoral visits are made.

Other Groups

Apart from church activities the hall provides a space for a local Dance Group 5 days a week and a Yoga group, both of whom have a good relationship with the church.

Community Pastor

Apart from obvious church activities, Kay has the privilege of being recognised as Community Pastor by the Primary School, PCBA, RSL, Rotary, Cittamani, Compass and the broader community which provides opportunities to be a guest speaker and consultant, gently connecting the church with the community.

School Chaplaincy

Members of the Palmwoods church support the local school chaplain in practical ways through donations and helping with weekly breakfasts and other events. We are also called on for helping with particular community needs and prayer requests.

KAY NIXON

GROUPS AT MONTVILLE

Reflection Gallery, Montville

The Reflection Gallery, which began in 2017, is the brain child of Rev Ron Potter. Ron's vision is to see the Montville Uniting Church premises being used as the on-going venue for art displays, this to be a part of the Congregation's Christian witness in the community, the building becoming widely known as a place of inspiration and hope. The aim of the Reflection Gallery is expressed in the motto, "reflecting faith's experience". We display works of art that reflect the Christian faith of their artists. At the same time, we invite contemplation and reflection on the works displayed.

The Congregation has a history of Christmas and Easter displays and Ron has used the building to mount displays there of his own paintings. The building, situated as it is in the busy tourist strip of the Main Street, is opened daily for prayer and reflection. Montville is a place where people expect to see art works on display. What would distinguish this gallery from others in the town is its spiritual, religious or Christian emphasis.

That doesn't mean that all paintings have to have an overtly religious theme, nor would they avoid dealing with the darker side of life, but they would be displayed within the context of Christian faith, hope and love.

Displays change periodically with the changes being advertised as widely as practicable.

Displays lasting several weeks are installed, on invitation, by a single artist, by 2 or 3 artists working together, or by a congregation. The artists who have contributed to the Reflection Gallery are Greg Nowell, Geraldine Wheeler, Jo Lane, Ric Todhunter, Graham Warne, Kyleigh Simpson, Greg Nowell with daughters Haylee and Brooke, Marilyn Cook, Annette Ireland, Banners from Redcliffe and Wynnum Uniting Churches, Barbara Willcocks, Jasmine Davies, Ron Potter, Dorothy Peall, Helen Sheriff, Lyndell Hulme, Laura McDade, Wendy Jarrott-Smith, Graham Warne, Christmas Display by Montville Church and Art Avenida.

The Gallery is open daily from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm.

BARBARA WILLCOCKS

The Prayer Shawl

Based on the Prayer Trees which have been part of the Christmas Displays in the Montville Church for years, a prayer shawl now invites visitors to the church to write their own prayers on cards which they pin onto the white shawl draped across one of the windows in the porch. Many and varied those prayers are, but sincere, though necessarily brief. Hence the invitation is not limited to the weeks leading up to Christmas, but continues throughout the year. Forty cards were pinned to the shawl in April and those prayer-topics have been taken up in services.

RON POTTER

Church and School – Montville

For many years the folk of the Montville Congregation have invited the children from the State School across the road to come across for special events highlighting the Christian message as it relates to Christmas and Easter. Due to covid restrictions, the students now stay within the school and those members of the Montville Church who hold the required Blue Cards, assist the RI teacher with craft work as appropriate to the time of the year. It seems that this new format is here to stay. Thanks to Natalie for her cooperation.

RON POTTER

GROUPS AT MALENY

Maleny Book Club History

Back in 2010 I remember long discussions with Adrienne Dempster about a book she had lent me. It was “The Red Tent” by Anita Diamant. She thought that it would be helpful to be part of a group who could all contribute ideas and responses. It wasn’t long before we found that several women knew about Book Clubs or had belonged to Book Clubs in other locations and were ready to form a group.



The local branch of the Sunshine Coast Library provides a wonderful service for a minimal cost. Sets of eight books are ordered monthly, distributed, and a month later the group meets to share thoughts about the book. The idea of moving around homes worked well until we realised that it was easier for Ann Brooker if we met in her home. (At that stage Ann was our senior member being well into her nineties and was a well read, feisty contributor).

Over the years ladies have come and gone and at one stage membership way exceeded eight and there was a waiting list. The bigger number caused logistical difficulties, both with the need to share books and with the size of dining room tables!! The solution was to form two groups, and this was done by drawing names from a hat. These two smaller groups soon expanded to eight each and maybe in the future more groups will evolve.

A key role in the group is that of co-ordinator. Books are selected and distributed and returned to the library. Several women have filled this role. One group finds that a different style of sharing has also worked this year where ladies bring their own choice of a book to talk about and to recommend, or not recommend to members.

Yes, within the group we are able to be honest and state what we like or don't like about a book. Our tastes are certainly diverse, but we have learned to be respectful of those with differing opinions.

NANCY BAKER

Cuppa Craft

Cuppa Craft meets at the Maleny Church on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month from 9.30am until 12 o'clock. Everyone is welcome to come and have a chat and a cup of tea or coffee for as long as you are available. We bring along the craft we are working on at the moment or find something unfinished. We bandy about ideas about the crafts we have done in the past and what we might do in the future. We have seen knitting, crochet, tapestry, cotton reel knitting, jigsaw puzzles (lots at the church to borrow) and decorating little boxes. We would love to see you at our next morning group.



Cuppa Craft – Hard at work – and play!

LORRAINE HOWE

Christmas Tree Festival

The Christmas Tree Festival had its origins in the vision of the 2012 Maleny Church Council to reach out more proactively to the Maleny Community with the message of Jesus – and to do this in a way that was non-threatening, but also clearly demonstrated that the coming of Jesus can bring hope and meaning to our 21st Century world just as it did over 2000 years ago.

The medium was to be a Christmas Tree Festival, community groups invited to contribute a tree which could go on display in the week prior to Christmas. During this week, the church would be open to the public to enjoy the colourful Christmas Displays. The fifty plus contributing groups represented a wide range of local organisations – including service clubs, schools, kindergarten and the churches. This continued from 2012 to 2019.

With Covid in 2020, an online event was held. Regular contributors responded to the challenge by producing unique Messages of Hope in short videos which were collated to make an inspirational presentation. In addition, our own church was lit up with extra Christmas lights and a large # HOPE 4 U sign drawing attention to an illuminated Nativity Scene. This was, and is, an ongoing message to the community.

A different theme was selected every year with the trees consistently showcasing Maleny's creative genius. It is worth noting that many of the displays portrayed the spiritual significance along with the wonder that is Christmas – family, fun, children, food, decorations, gifts, you name it.

Entry to the displays was free with visitor donations going each year to one of three local organisations – Maleny Neighbourhood Centre, Hospital Auxiliary and Range Care. The selected group always partnered with the Church team to provide supervisors. A significant connection.

The Festival culminated at the Christmas Eve service featuring music, and a locally produced themed on-stage presentation. Always well attended, the service was filled with the joy of Christmas, highlighted by the great enjoyment of all ages, and always focused on the real meaning of Christmas – a refreshing change in this secular world.

Significant incidental benefits and blessings emerged along the way – the community drawing together for a common purpose; the Church standing in solidarity with its Christian message, as well as reaching out to the wider community; the mantle of prayer support; the prayer tree receiving heartfelt prayer requests, church members taking on myriad roles to make the event a reality each year finding new skills, gaining new confidence, making new friends.

A couple of personal anecdotes sum up the impact of the Christmas Tree Festival over the years. A family visited the display, just having received some sad family news. Our minister was on hand to provide support. Bibles offered for children all went! A woman had spent an unhappy visit with her family. She left them feeling quite sad. On her way home that day, she passed the Church and decided on the spur of the moment to come in. She told a supervisor that this was the best thing she had done that day – the peaceful atmosphere of the displays brought her comfort from the turmoil of the day.

So many blessings like this emerged from the Christmas Tree Festival.

MURRAY ROBERTSON

Know Your Bible [KYB]

K Y B is a Bible study and technique developed by C W C I (Christian Women Communicating International) Australia. An ecumenical organisation. These studies have been produced for women in Australia since about 1970, but now there are several men's groups finding how good the studies are. The studies are produced quarterly and usually look at a book from the Bible (e.g. Acts, Nehemiah, Daniel, Ephesians, etc.) or sometimes they have a theme (e.g. Holy Spirit), with all references in the Bible from Genesis to the New Testament. Now many of the studies are being translated so people in the Solomon Is, Indonesia, Zimbabwe, Russia, Denmark, etc. can use the material.

The lessons are set with questions which we answer at home (this is not hard) and then at the meeting we share our answers. We get a variety of ideas and there are no wrong answers. It really helps you think about what you are reading and opens up new insights. You don't need to know anything about the Bible to join the group.

Annette Grice started the group in our church, and it has continued ever since. We in Maleny, meet at the church at 1:30 p.m. on Fridays during school semesters. We have gained so much in our understanding of God and his purpose for our lives. Also, we are enriched by our time of sharing. Ladies from all denominations can join our group. If you want to join us or have questions or if ladies or men would like to start a group of their own, they can talk to me. 5494 2486.

DOROTHY TIETZE

Maleny Neighbourhood Centre

Last October (2020) I was elected to the Management Committee of the Maleny Neighbourhood Centre. I felt a little unsure of what my role would be within this community organization. It didn't take me long to find out. The ongoing problem of homelessness, and the Women's House in particular is where I feel that I can contribute. The house has three generous size bedrooms and two bathrooms. It has an updated kitchen that has good cooking facilities and two large refrigerators. There is a dining room and lounge room combined and also an outdoor eating area. It has room for two vehicles undercover. I am also on the sub-committee trying to get the house running smoothly. I can't even imagine myself [or Peter and I] living in our car for a year or more, yet this is what many people are faced with.



I, along with a long-term part-time employee, work directly with the women in the house. Women come into the Centre or contact us through phone calls looking for assistance. Each applicant is assessed and has to meet certain criteria. Unfortunately, not all women are accepted. Some women are by themselves and some may have children with them. We try to assist them to get registered with the government housing and financial assistance agencies and the private assistance agencies. We try to encourage them into the habit of contacting these agencies on a weekly basis. "The squeaky wheel is the one that gets attention" is what we often remind them. Importantly, we also build up a real relationship with these women.

Maleny Neighbourhood Centre endeavors to provide many services to the community but emergency relief is a large part of their role. They have a huge pantry style room filled with non-perishable food items. Our Maleny U.C. regularly helps to fill these shelves. The Centre also gives out swags, tents and warm bedding. Just inside the front fence is a *Little Pantry* that is mostly kept stocked with meals and food items, people can just pull up there and know that they can get something to eat after the Centre is closed.

The Management Committee meets once per month and has a huge agenda to work through. At the moment we are finalizing our Strategic Plan for the next three years. The people I work with are very friendly, committed and encouraging. The Maleny Neighbourhood Centre is doing a lot of the work that the churches used to do, I feel that this is the place where God wants me to be and I thank you, my Maleny Uniting Church family, for having the faith in me to allow me to be your representative at the M.N.C.

MERILYN MILTON

The Church Library

There is a library of Christian books, donated by members of the congregation over the years, in the Prayer Room behind the organ at the front of the Maleny church. There are 321 books listed in the catalogue with a few more recent arrivals. As well as books, there is a collection of videos and several jigsaw puzzles. All are welcome to come into the Prayer Room and browse. Items may be borrowed, and you are asked to fill in your and the item's details in the book provided.

The books on the shelves are in alphabetical order by title. The book catalogue is available on the Maleny Uniting Church's website at <https://maleny.ourcommonlife.org.au/library-catalogue/>

STUART CRAIG

Band of Brothers

A decade or so ago (time passes so quickly) a number of men at Maleny felt a need for a men's group to share their concerns and socialise. And so, the Band of Brothers was formed. Initially, we met twice a month alternating between a broadly theological discussion and a social activity. Glen Gill guided us in a number of discussions on father-son relationships along with movies such as "A river runs through it". Wyn Boon led us on a few sallies into the wild to the stone "Egg" in the Conondale ranges and old gold mine sites there also. Our 'expert' fisherman Ray Ellemor organised fishing expeditions to Burumba Dam and Pumicestone Passage, and I (Karl) organised a visit to the observatory at Yandina; a visit to Franz's 'Movieworld'; and a few tenpin bowling excursions. The group has also undertaken the odd building work at Palmwoods church and 'manse' as well as extending and lining a house for a lady outside Kenilworth and Ian Gledall near Conondale. Meeting times had dropped to monthly and then Covid restricted activities over the last year (and, I suspect, we've done the more obvious attractions) but we hope to again have social outings under Roger Smith's leadership as guru of the barbeque.

KARL TEITZE

Ladies Friendship Group

When the present building was built by volunteers in 1989/90, the women gave great support and were thrilled to have a new venue for their Ladies Fellowship Group. (Many women had had a pre- Church Union background of Guilds or Women's Groups).

For many years there were traditional monthly meetings with an emphasis on service and fundraising. One wonderful gifting to the community was a well received Christmas Luncheon for lonely folk.

Eventually a decision was made to cease the formal meetings and, because friendships were so strong, morning teas were held in private homes. Then those numbers increased and the women met in a cafe up town. Eventually, it was decided to recommence meetings at the church but without the emphasis on fundraising and formal meeting procedure.

The name FRIENDSHIP group seemed a good fit and we have gone from strength to strength.

The current model has meant that small teams take responsibility for planning, setting up and running one meeting per year. The variety of themes and locations maintains our interest.

2020 started with a meeting in February where a full year was planned. Then the wheels fell off the trolley. It wasn't until July that we actually got restarted, but since then, we are grateful that we can meet albeit with appropriate social distancing and Covid safe food distribution. We are thankful for those ladies who kept in contact with offers of help for those going through particularly tough times.



2021 got off to a great start with good attendances at the monthly meetings. We made a visit to the Baptist Sitting Room during Autism Awareness month; Liena led us in a morning of celebration of mothers; and most recently we broadened the invitation and were delighted to welcome male and female visitors to a Practical First Aid demonstration.

Our ladies benefit from Ecumenical events like the bi-monthly breakfasts which most recently have become more Covid do-able as morning teas. Participation in the annual World Day of Prayer is another chance to share with other Christian folk.

There are some wider activities as well. Two book Clubs meet monthly and many of our ladies participate in Connect groups. We encourage members to use the church book and jigsaw puzzle libraries. One of the most appreciated outreaches from the group is the frozen food ministry. A project to knit beanies for school girls in India has just begun as is a continuation of our previous support when scarves were knitted and bed covers made.

All are welcome to any or all of the monthly meetings.

NANCY BAKER

Christian Meditation

After a talk on Christian meditation to the Maleny Friendship Group by Rev Adrienne Dempster, a couple of ladies asked her if she would consider establishing a group at Maleny church. That was just over ten years ago, and we have been meeting at 8.30 each Wednesday morning ever since [we do break over Christmas and for COVID]. Both women and men form the group, and there was one memorable morning when there were more men than women present.



The group is affiliated with the World Community of Christian Meditation and its Australian bodies. A search of its website – wccm.org – tells their story very well.

The practice is part of the Christian mystical tradition, which was re-discovered and developed by Father John Main, a Benedictine monk, and since his death, has been led by Fr Laurence Freeman. Both have authored many books on the subject as well as a range of educational CD's that traverse a range of topics to do with Christian thought and teaching [e.g. Spirituality for a secular age; The virus of Perfectionism; Aspects of Love; Listening to the news with a contemplative heart]. We listen to one of the tracks from these CD's each time we meet before moving into twenty minutes of silence.

On the day of writing this, the daily teaching from WCCM, written by Laurence Freeman, was interesting so I share it.

“There is a difference between Christian and non-Christian meditation. The difference is the faith that we bring to our meditation as Christians, which is our faith experience of Jesus as Teacher, Saviour and Lord – as Jesus living, through the Resurrection, in us. So, we would see our meditation as prayer, as a very pure and simple kind of prayer. As with all prayer from a Christian point of view, it leads us into the prayer of Christ, into unity with the humanity of Christ, and then joining him in his journey to the Father in the Spirit. So, there is this Trinitarian Father-Son-Spirit dynamic that underlies our understanding and experience of meditation as Christians.”

This silent prayer doesn't replace other prayers. It is quite different in its approach. We try to concentrate on saying our mantra, a sacred word or phrase, over and over, so we empty our minds to allow room for God. It is a way of simplicity, silence and stillness.

At the personal level, we are encouraged to spend time in meditation each morning and evening. Wednesday mornings, however, are community time and there is such strength in

praying together. After we finish, those who choose, adjourn to Maple 3 for coffee and chat – and that is when pastoral care occurs, and we sometimes also fix the problems of the world.

We average between 12 and 15 each time we meet and there is plenty of room for anyone else who may be interested.

GRAHAM DEMPSTER

School Chaplaincy

This report will only touch on the school chaplaincy services in Maleny. There may be chaplains at others schools along the Blackall Range and in the Palmwoods-Woombye area, but these are not covered here.

Chaplains operate at Maleny State Primary School (Becky Francis) and Maleny State High School (Micah Jones). Both Becky and Micah are at these schools for 3 days a week and Becky works an additional 2 days at Conondale State School.

School chaplains are employed by agencies outside the school. The vast majority of these agencies are Christian-based and hence over 96% of school chaplains are professing Christians. Part of their salary comes from a Federal Government grant and the remainder from the communities that they serve. Usually, a local chaplaincy committee supports the chaplain in his or her work and engages in fundraising. To a great extent, the chaplains are supported by donations from individuals, businesses, churches, service clubs and other community organisations.



School chaplains like Becky and Micah are an integral part of support services for all students and, being a little bit separate from the other school employees, they can often reach young people who may not readily open up to school staff. If we were to ask Micah or Becky what some of the most serious issues are that they deal with, they would probably say: "Health, including mental health issues, relationship problems, behavioural issues, financial problems, homelessness, death and grief." But it's not all doom and gloom – they are able to share in the joy and celebration that comes with school life and their mentoring role gives them a unique opportunity to feed in positive messages to students and encourage them to make responsible choices.

Chaplains are there to help everyone in need and they participate in school life in various ways: camps, sports days, personal development courses, breakfast clubs and small group work. They can offer assistance to families who are going through tough times. Our school chaplains provide a listening ear without judgement, evangelism or prejudice. They offer pastoral care to those of any faith or of no faith.

Becky and Micah and other chaplains often visit churches to outline the nature of their work. Invariably, they will ask for prayer so that they may be given strength, wisdom, discernment and courage in dealing with some of the situations that arise. Their faith can shine through by way of being genuine, compassionate and caring. These qualities go into the nature of everything they do as chaplains.

PAUL TARBUCK

(Chairperson, Maleny High School Local Chaplaincy Committee)

Mentoring

A mentoring program is conducted by the school chaplaincy service at the Maleny and Conondale schools. Some people in our congregation have been mentors. Mentors are community members who have undergone the training program and are prepared to volunteer at the school for one hour per week, for a year.

Mentors are matched with a child selected by teaching staff and the chaplain. Some children have huge obstacles to overcome at school. Mentors give them an hour of quality one on one time each week – a non-judgmental listening ear, a caring presence, a friend. Not directed specifically to academic learning outcomes (although this can be a by-product), the program can centre around activities that bring the child and mentor together. It could be board games, building and construction, crafts, art, reading, stories, sports, cooking, gardening, music.

Our world has so many children in crisis, so there is always a need for mentors in our schools. Why not give it a try? A child will be blessed and so will you.

MURRAY ROBERTSON

Connect Groups

“Connect Groups” is the name given to Maleny Uniting Church’s small groups. They are groups of 6 to 10 people who meet for Christian discussion, usually at members’ homes.

The name “Connect Group” was first used in 2018. It replaced “Crews” that were groups that were set up for one particular study. Before that, various groups were formed on a casual basis. The current Connect groups have evolved from those initial groups.

Some groups have a designated leader, and some operate without a formal leader. Each of the groups meet at different times and with different frequency. Often, the discussion topic or study has been selected or devised by the Minister or other groups but sometimes the groups find their own material. In all cases the groups enjoy Christian discussion.

The hope for Connect Groups is that Christians can meet for discussion and prayer in a relaxed fashion. New members of the church and anyone not currently in a Connect Group are encouraged to join one. Stuart and Jan Craig are the coordinators and would be happy to help.

STUART AND JAN CRAIG

Pastoral Care

In Galatians 6: 9-10 Paul instructs the people – *Let us not be weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. NIV.*

So, we are all instructed to care for each other. How can we do this effectively?

In the Maleny church we have established groups – connect, men’s, ladies, book club, bible study, meditation. All these people are asked to be aware of their members’ needs, hopes and frailties and assist appropriately. Any serious concerns may be reported to the pastoral care leader and /or the minister.

This does not cover all the congregation. There are some who volunteer their time (and we need



a lot more) to phone, visit, or chat to people where they meet them, so we keep a contact and encourage people with hope and care.

We have a group who welcome all at the church services and seek to help all feel welcome. We hope to have a hand-out for visitors or new people to list our activities and visions.

We try to maintain a record of people in our church family so at our bi-monthly pastoral care meetings we can see if any need more contact or assistance. This need should be reported to us by the groups or care volunteers at or before the meeting.

Some people cook meals, and these are frozen ready to offer to those who are sick, or a need is seen.

There are those who share meals, write letters or meet up for coffee and many other acts of kindness performed.

So, we try to live up to Paul's instructions in our church.

DOROTHY TEITZE

Prayer Network

In addition to the prayers in our worship services, we have two other strings to our corporate prayer bow. These are co-ordinated, led and inspired by Helen Uhlmann.

The first is the prayer 'chain', and the other, the 'prayer meeting' before worship at Maleny each Sunday.



Helen is the contact point for prayer requests for whatever matter. Each Saturday she prepares a list of prayer points for the coming week and emails them to people on the 'prayer chain' – people across all the three worships places. This helps greatly in keeping all aware of pressure points across the range and within congregations.

The other place – Sunday mornings at Maleny – is open to all who like to attend and is focussed more on local issues.

Anyone interested in either group, please contact Helen – 0407 542 142

EDITOR

RI at Maleny Primary School

There have been Religious Instruction classes in Maleny Primary School for many decades. Originally, the local Church ministers were the instructors and gradually they were assisted by congregational members of Maleny churches. Today, the majority of RI teachers are members of local churches who undergo annual training and regular meetings to keep them informed of rule changes and new ideas. At present, the Uniting Church is represented by two congregation members. There are more children attending RI in Maleny Primary School than all the churches' Sunday School classes in Maleny. Most RI groups are seeking more teachers – There are never enough volunteers.

FAITH MCKINNON

AND SOME FUNNIES TO FINISH

There was a Scottish house painter named Smokey MacGregor who was very interested in making a penny where he could, so he often thinned down his paint to make it go a wee bit further. As it happened, he got away with this for some time, but eventually the Baptist Church decided to do a big restoration job on the outside of one of their biggest buildings. Smokey put in a bid, and, because his price was so low, he got the job. So he set about erecting the scaffolding and setting up the planks, and buying the paint and, yes, I am sorry to say, thinning it down with water...



Well, Smokey was up on the scaffolding, painting away, the job nearly completed, when suddenly there was an horrendous clap of thunder, the sky opened, and the rain poured down washing the thinned paint from all over the church and knocking Smokey clear off the scaffold to land on the lawn among the gravestones, surrounded by telltale puddles of the thinned and useless paint.

Smokey was no fool. He knew this was a judgement from the Almighty, so he got down on his knees and cried: "Oh, God, Oh God, forgive me; what should I do?"

And from the thunder, a mighty voice spoke.

"Repaint! Repaint! And thin no more!"



A little silver-haired lady calls her neighbour and says, "Please come over here and help me. I have a killer jigsaw puzzle, and I can't figure out how to get started."

Her neighbour asks, "What is it supposed to be when it's finished?" and the little silver haired lady says, "According to the picture on the box, it's a rooster."



Her neighbour decides to go over and help with the puzzle. She lets him in and shows him where she has the puzzle spread all over the table. He studies the pieces for a moment, then looks at the box, and turns to her and says,

"First, no matter what we do, we're not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a rooster." He takes her hand and says, "Secondly, I want you to relax. Let's have a nice cup of tea, and then," he said with a deep sigh ... "Let's put all the Corn Flakes back in the box."

