



Spring 2022

Vicki's idea of our Spring Mark the Word being a "potpourri" (or, as the expression signifies, a "medley or "assortment") has resulted in this Edition having a "bunch" of personal stories, a mix of church-related articles, and vivid photos not unlike what might befit a true potpourri which suggests a variety of scents, colour and poignancy. This is especially reflected in the contribution from John Hood giving us an insight into life in Kolkata in Rinsed Turmeric, an evocative piece in which we can almost smell and taste Kolkata.

From Peter Blackwood's profound reflection on the meaningfulness of the icon, drawing on the example of St Hildegard of Bingen; to the heart-warming story of Rob and Norma's little Zoe; to Ann's story of the re-emergence of MtE's Dinners for Eight; and to Rosalie's article, based on her new book, making a timely enquiry into ageing in a nursing home. As well, we have our regular contributions from Craig who always gives us a thought-provoking message and Tim O'Connor who unfailingly keeps us up to date with Church Council matters.

Finally, we have inspiring choices of music from Donald Nicolson, our Music Director and organist, who contributes to our weekly worship with glorious and beautiful organ music (when he is not on tour!).

So, as you can see, this Edition is really a potpourri of ideas and experiences! Enjoy!

Vicki Radcliffe and Rosemary Wearing

Co-editors.

The Editors, Vicki and Rosemary, warmly thank all our contributors and with special thanks to Donald with this choice of music. Above all, as has always been the case in every MtW Edition, we wish to thank Rod Mummery, the Producer of MtW, who is tirelessly available for advice and expertise 24/7 and his long association with MtW which adds wisdom and quality of an exceptional nature.

From the Minister

by Craig Thompson

Welcome to the Spring 2022 issue of MtW. Rosemary has suggested to me that this issue is a "potpourri" of contributions on different themes. Such a this-and-that collection is perhaps appropriate to where many of us seem to be at the moment – not quite here or there; certainly not post-pandemic but scarcely past it either, knowing where we might be heading as a congregation but also that we might not; perhaps on the cusp of all sorts of possibilities socially and politically, but still waiting to see which promises will be realized, and which threats. And the spring weather is proving particularly uncertain, even for Melbourne!

In the midst of all this buffeting about, our confidence is not in what we see but in the vision we hold that God has for us – made from us but in such a way that we cannot yet imagine. It is good, however, to be reminded of the parts which we are, as we look forward to see what God will make of us. Enjoy these pieces!

News from Church Council

By Tim O'Connor, Secretary of Church Council

▪ **Extension of the Minister's placement**

Knowing that Craig's placement as Minister of Mark the Evangelist will end in 2023 after a term of ten years, the Church Council asked Craig to consider a further term of up to five years, in order that he might continue his highly valued ministry to the Congregation, all the more so at this time of transition. With his consent, we recommended to a congregational meeting on 14 August held for that purpose that the Congregation request the Presbytery to extend Craig's placement for up to five years. The meeting voted unanimously to do so, with strong expressions of support.

▪ **Congregational life**

Craig facilitated a conversation in July which invited responses to members' experiences of worship services this year, and in September he gave a workshop to assist those involved in preparing or interested in the intercessory prayers. The customary All Saints Day luncheon makes a welcome return to the congregation's calendar for the first time since 2020 and will be held on 6 November.

▪ **Mark the Evangelist Futures Project**

In early August the Council informed the Presbytery of our resolution, endorsed by the Congregation, to proceed with further exploration of the option for Mark the Evangelist to relocate to the CTM. The Presbytery in turn requested the Synod to "appoint a nominee from the relevant governance body to represent the Synod in the exploration of the proposal [relocation of Mark the Evangelist to the Centre for Theology and Ministry]". Presbytery's request has been referred to the Ministry & Mission Committee which next meets on 19 October. The Council decided in August to expand the membership of the MTEFP Working Group by inviting as members Peter Blackwood, Gaye Champion, Rosalie Hudson and Heather Mathew, who agreed to join Rod Mummery, David Radcliffe, Craig Thompson and Alan Wilkinson. At the expanded Working Group's first meeting in September, Peter accepted nomination as convenor and Alan as minute secretary, maintaining one of the tasks that he has undertaken for several years as MTEFP Coordinator. The Working Group will be responsible for consultations with Pilgrim Theological College and with the personnel of equipping Leadership for Mission (eLM) on the possible relocation of Mark the Evangelist to the Centre for Theology and Ministry (CTM). Among other things, it will attend to discovering more about the potential of the CTM option and make recommendations to the Council on the option.

Comments, queries and suggestions are welcomed by the Church Councillors:

Gaye Champion (Elder), Mark Duckworth (Chairperson of Hotham Mission Board), John Langmore (Elder), Rod Mummery (Elder, Treasurer and Deputy Chair), Tim O'Connor (Elder and Secretary), David Radcliffe (Elder), Craig Thompson (Minister), Rosemary Wearing (Elder) and Alan Wilkinson (Mark the Evangelist Futures Project Coordinator)

Our Zoe – Star of Press and TV

by Rob and Norma Gallacher

The Children's Hospital rang.

Now that is unusual. Ever since our grand-daughter, Zoe, had her liver transplant on her first birthday, the calls have been TO the Hospital. And there have been a lot of these emergency calls in the two years since the operation.

(Zoe was born on 17th May, 2019 with a liver that was not draining. An operation and further treatment at the Children's Hospital could not solve the problem. The child was jaundiced and her liver was degenerating while they waited for a matching liver to transplant. On her first birthday the transplant took place. It was successful, but as the doctor said, the parents were substituting one set of problems for another. Anti-rejection drugs had to be administered constantly, and Zoe's resistance to infection was low. Never-the-less, here she is at three and a half with the appearance and personality of a normal child.)

But this was different. Now there was a campaign to increase the number of organ donors, and the Hospital wanted Zoe to be featured on TV and in the press, to show what a successful transplant can do. The campaign was to promote the cause and to appeal for more organ donors. Zoe's parents were pleased to cooperate. It seemed the least they could do after all that the hospital had done for them.

First the TV cameras came. They filmed quite a lot. Eagerly that night we turned to Channel 9 news and sure enough there she was. It was brief, but it was our Zoe. Then we switched to Channel 7 and were just in time to see her again. It was very exciting.

The next day Zoe's parents took her into the Children's Hospital. There, a reporter and photographer awaited. And sure enough, in the next edition of the Herald-Sun, she appeared, right in the middle of three children who had received similar transplants. Now judge for yourself but isn't our Zoe just the happiest, healthiest, most photogenic child imaginable?



Photographer: David Caird (Herald Sun)

We are extremely grateful to the Children's Hospital for the medical miracles they can perform, and for the ongoing care and immediate attention available when needed. We hope their campaign for organ donors is successful.

Of Rinsed Turmeric and Carbon Monoxide

by John Hood

Until March, 2020 I used to spend a few months each year in my flat in Kolkata. I went there in 2020, intending to stay for three months, but was obliged to return to Melbourne after only three weeks. A pandemic had struck, and so many millions of worlds were subsequently turned inside out. God has graciously kept me safe from the dreaded virus, but I suffer constantly from pangs of nostalgia – the emotional pain caused by the limited power of images in detachment from the realities they represent. Let me share some of these images.

Kolkata and I are both extremely sensuous and so we are much suited to one another. Like any big, modern city, Kolkata has a multitude of features but is actually lived in memory by the recollection of its sights and sounds, its tastes and smells and even its touch.

It is indeed vain to try to conjure a visual image of the city not dominated by an over-arching, all-pervasive chaos. It is as though one or two Grand Final crowds have suddenly spilled onto every thoroughfare, many of them being siphoned off into narrow, winding lanes to join with rickshaws and handcarts, bicycles and motor-bikes, in creating a world bordering on the absurd. Back on the main roads and footpaths humankind does its thing, unrestrained. Traffic lights exercise some discipline on the old-fashioned and faint-hearted, but most Kolkatans are daring, impatient, perverse, seemingly suicidal or just simply lunatic and are a constant challenge to motorists keen not to kill people. The streets are crowded even at night, especially in the summer-time when people, touched by the heat of the day, find a little relief outside.

One is touched by the heat in summer and by the cold in winter. An unforgettable tactile experience is being caught in the rain. If you are walking outside, you will notice the light growing dramatically dimmer and then the temperature drops noticeably; instantly, you know you have exactly 18.3 seconds to find reliable shelter; this is common knowledge, for already there is no room under the awnings of nearby shops. At first the sky spits with gentle arrogance, cold, big spits, and then quite without warning a quantity of water equivalent in volume to the Bay of Bengal passes through an immense cosmic sieve and crashes onto the slow and the stupid in the streets below, helpless souls who have not only been soaked but also bruised by the weight of the downpour. You know that this one will pass and sunshine will, at least for a time, prevail, and that then there will be something else to be touched by – the bizarre caress of intense humidity. However, the falling of oceans from the sky can be something wondrous at night if you are sitting on your balcony, watching a grand heavenly sound and light show, as the gods of thunder engage in passionate disputation with the gods of lightning while elemental powers send floods relentlessly crashing to the ground. It all passes, and early the next morning the sun is shining and the koel bird is telling all who can hear that love is in the air. Its mating call is, in musical terms, a simple major third, offered tranquilly in a mood of peace or excitedly in a mood of passion, but that is not for general exhibition.

My favourite season is autumn, warm enough but not enervating. A most romantic feature of this time of year comes in the afternoon, sometime after 3.00, when the light takes on a distinct tinge. It is like looking at everything through a yellow filter or, as my dear friend and eminent writer, Prafulla Roy puts it, the light is tinted by the colour of rinsed turmeric. In late autumn the mornings are nice, too, with a light fog and a crisp smell in the air. It can be quite cold in winter, making it necessary to put a blanket on the bed.

I drive a car in Kolkata. I will leave it to others to decide if this statement is a boast of my bravery or a confession of insanity. Despite my rigid determination to maintain my Anglo-Saxon good sense and courtesy of the road, I was Kolkatised in no time at all. An example: three or four or more lanes of traffic are arrested by a red light. It has been red for a twentieth of a second before impatience sets in and you hear engines being revved all around. Unable to restrain his anticipation of ecstasy, one driver lets slip a toot, another responds in sympathy and then – bliss! – the traffic light is green and there is a triumphal surge of cars, every driver with one foot on the accelerator and one hand on the horn.

A favourite stretch of mine is the bottom end of S.N. Banerjee Rd, the part where a number of grocer shops pour out the fragrance of their spices, creating an olfactory delight that is inevitably punctuated by a burst of carbon monoxide from a passing bus. A little further on we come across a street food-stall where a number of office-workers are enjoying a late breakfast. There is the enticing aroma of mustard oil and the stomach-challenging smells of luchis and parathas being fried, alongside big pots of potato curry. I walk down the next right, a narrow winding lane which will take me to the library where I will spend an hour or two,



having got through the very serious business of barefoot little boys playing a tense and desperate-to-win test match in the impossibly crowded lane.

The maidan is a vast open area in roughly the middle of the city, sometimes referred to as ‘the lungs of Kolkata’. It is a largely open, grassed area of about a thousand acres that can accommodate at least twelve cricket matches played concurrently, cater for the grazing needs of small herds of goats and the occasional cow, and give sunshine and fresh air to groups of young men sitting in circles and enjoying serious conversation. At one end is the memorial to Queen Victoria – a derivative piece of architecture that tries to overshadow the Taj Mahal – and at the other end there is a bus and tram terminus. But on a week day morning the maidan enjoys very meagre patronage and so offers a very pleasant place in which to stroll.

All these reminders of a place I love so much have prompted in my mind a cacophony of aural images that so readily define Kolkata. There is the constant barking of minibus conductors, hanging out of the doors of their speeding vehicles, the sloganeering of marchers in a demonstration, thrusting their fists skyward as they shout their demands for a golden tomorrow, the slightly out of harmony tunes being played by a uniformed wind band escorting a groom and his party to his wedding, the fishmongers in the markets rival one another in their quest for custom, and there are the cries of the morning hawkers and service providers going through the lanes and backstreets collecting newspapers and empty bottles, seeking to sharpen knives and scissors on the spot, selling saris and shawls or delivering gas cylinders. And coming most wistfully over a community loudspeaker or a private radio with the volume turned up will be a song of Tagore, so integral to the distinct and rich culture of West Bengal, in whose mad capital such beauty is never out of place.

Painting and Singing and Laughing

by Peter Blackwood

I am often asked what attracted me to icons and painting them. I was recently asked in an ABC interview why I like singing in choirs. In both cases my answer is, ‘I don’t know.’ It seems to me that the problem is similar to, ‘Why do you find that joke funny?’ Explain a joke and something of its joy is lost. Maybe that is why I don’t want to analyse my interest in iconography or my enjoyment of singing.

In our congregation an icon is now appearing with the brief biography of our saintly person remembered in our calendar of commemorations in the order of service each week. Let me try another analogy to lend some aid to appreciating icons. We sing hymns that consist of music and poetry. Each of these can have a life of its own. We can play the music or recite the poem. When they come together in song the music adds meaning, usually mood, to the poetry. The poetry also adds significance to the music.

Knowing the story of the saint whose image is depicted in an icon adds significance to the icon. It is the work of an iconographer to enable a saint, whose life of holiness inspires us, to be set before us beautifully in human form. If the style of the music of a hymn is beyond our familiarity or appreciation it can be a distraction to the poetry. Music style is learned. That comes from listening. The same may be said of icons. The unfamiliar style of art may be a distraction to the story of a saint. This style of art is learned. That comes from looking. Maybe it also comes from turning a well-known saying on its head – believing is seeing.



Dinners for Eight 2022

by Ann Wilkinson

After the two COVID years we were able this year to organise another Dinners for Eight program. It was smaller than the program in earlier years mainly because many people are still understandably cautious about venturing out.

Three dinners were organised. Two were Sunday lunches attended by 6 and 4 participants. The third was a dinner enjoyed by 8.

Those involved reported that they very much enjoyed the chance for a relaxed occasion and a chat over a meal. The hosts were very happy to welcome Mark the Evangelist friends into their homes and were also most appreciative of the food brought by their guests. These occasions usually involve the hosts providing the main course, and guests bringing a dish, for example a salad or a dessert, and in that way sharing in the provision of the food.

We hope to run the program again next year and maybe more of you will want to be included. Let's hope that COVID has all but disappeared by then.

Aging in Nursing Home: foundations for care

by Rosalie Hudson

Preface

Spending the final chapter of your life in a nursing home is considered by many a fate worse than death, but this need not be so. The radical suggestion of this book is that with enlightened, imaginative care even the frailest of lives can flourish. We all have a stake in building a society that values its most vulnerable citizens. The key is to replace the former custodial attitudes with contemporary, evidence-based care. Such a cultural/philosophical shift is perceived as an urgent need in a rapidly ageing population, described in chapter 2, where welcoming diversity and creating hope are of the essence. In chapter 3 communication is shown to be an important signaller of attitude and intent from the waiting list to the end of life, with a particular focus on pivotal points of staff 'handover'. Issues of non-discrimination are described in the chapter, and reinforced throughout the whole book.

Government inquiries and COVID-19 pandemic revelations of sub-standard aged care call for systemic renewal. This book offers encouragement and practical guidance for those who strive for improvement: transformation springs from evidence-based practice. Chapter 4 highlights the building of confidence through partnerships with families and carers, promoting the use of knowledge that comes from residents' own experiences. The chapter describes the highest standards of clinical care by focussing on the social and gerontological aspects of the whole person.

Learning from the residents is key to responsive, enlightened dementia care; a notion permeating chapter 5. Due to extended life expectancy, nursing home residents are now older and frailer than ever before, with over fifty per cent having a diagnosis of dementia. Most have other complex, chronic conditions requiring significant multidisciplinary team input from healthcare professionals with broad aged care expertise. Nursing home managers are encouraged to reflect on where their emphasis lies, and the type of workforce best equipped to respond to residents' increasingly complex cognitive care needs.

Chapter 6 describes the way a palliative approach to care brings comfort to the resident when cure is no longer the aim. Residents are older and suffering greater co-morbidity than ever before, justifying the need for clinical governance which includes provision of palliative end-of-life care. Every resident has the right to a second opinion from an appropriate specialist in response to their life-threatening medical conditions, and the benefits of palliation deserve greater attention.

Recognising that most residents admitted to a nursing home will die there, chapter 7 brings the subjects of death and dying to the fore, rather than leaving the matter unaddressed or left until 'the end'. Compassionate, timely conversations inspire confidence that best practice end-of-life

care is assured for each resident. Leadership is the focus for chapter 8, where partnership with residents, carers and families is also highlighted. A key challenge is to ensure such care addresses the combined biological, psychological, spiritual and social factors that influence residents' health and wellbeing.

Many thousands of submissions to the 2019 Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety attest to the fact that, as a society, we do not value older people or aged care, prompting the title of the Interim Report: Neglect, and the Final Report (2021): Care, Dignity and Respect. Examples from these reports are cited in order to underscore the value of using evidence to guide practice.

Returning to the fears of those who would rather die than live in a nursing home, the last chapter (9) describes how excellence may be achieved, while accepting the inevitable occasions when things go wrong. The subject of elder abuse is also brought into the open, with suggestions for ameliorating this scourge.

Vignettes in every chapter describe the unique lives of individual residents and their carers. This is, or should be, what nursing home care is about. Within the framework of optimal medical, nursing, spiritual, psychological, social, volunteer and allied health support we encounter the totality of the resident's life, prompting targeted, responsive care. If caring is about giving and receiving, the ultimate question may be: what can this person teach me about how to care?



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