



Summer 2018

### **Welcome to the summer newsletter!**

It is the Christmas newsletter but also the Advent letter. As Craig reminds us, Advent appears before Christmas. But as well as looking ahead, because of its date in late November/Early December, Advent invites us to look back on the year just past. And so, we are doing a little of both.

Firstly, after Craig's introduction, Rod Mummery takes time out from publishing this newsletter to bring us news from Church Council. This includes the new initiative Safe Church Policy (on which, more later). One of our congregation writes about the landmark work at Port Fairy Music Festival that impressed her, describing it as a "confronting but reconciling requiem". Although the music is not published yet, you can follow links in this newsletter to find out more about the composer, Deborah Cheetham, an Aboriginal opera singer and composer.

We say farewell to a much-loved member of the congregation, Alec Wearing, and thank him for the gift he gave to Hotham Mission on his passing. And we hear from a community development officer for Hotham Mission whose work will benefit from that gift.

Finally, Ann's report on Safe Church Training indicates that the life and work of the church go on.

Suzanne Yanko, Editor

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### **From the Minister**

by Craig Thompson

Advent has arrived again. Is it not curious how the season which concerns itself with the arrival of God appears to be more reliable in its coming than does God? Every year, on the dot. The first Sunday in Advent in the year 2167 will be November 29. And it will be December 2 in 2351. Guaranteed. Assuming that we're still here to mark the time in this way.

Of course, this says more about the problems of the church's calendar than it has one than it does about God. For the coming of God is not a matter of an accumulation of sunrises and settings, as are the seasons; no one knows the day nor the hour'. But God's time is also not un-seasonal'. That is, God's coming is not occasional in response to things going badly for us; God is not generated out of our need. Rather, it is our faith that God has already come, in such a way as to mark all time as God's own whether times of presence' or absence', whether it feels' like God is close, or not.

This is the meaning of Christ's centrality to our account of God and of ourselves. The God we wait for is not the baby in the manger but the Holy, Immersed. The sign of the baby might be less that the wait is over (in which case, why do we still wait?) and perhaps more that babies themselves don't really wait'; they just are, need, respond, get on with the business of being as

it is given them to be. That God might be Holy and yet Immersed in this way is what gives shape to our waiting for God.

The season is not the sign of God's coming be it the season of the strength and verve of youth or that of the weariness and longing which life might later bring. That, as the carol has it, God in Christ spans crown and cross and cradle / sceptre, scourge and stable', is to say that God can be expected at any time and in any place. To wait for such a God is simply to live, eyes and ears open.

This Advent, and always, let's be open in this way!

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## **News from Church Council**

by Rod Mummery, Deputy Chair of Church Council

### **Mark the Evangelist Futures Project**

A significant amount of the Council's time has been taken up with lengthy deliberations regarding various aspects of the project. Regular updates have been provided to the congregation; the Council is committed to keeping the congregation well informed as the project continues.

### **Hotham Mission Constitution**

The Hotham Mission Board has revised the Constitution to account for changes to Synod structures and Parish Mission reporting requirements The Council approved the revised constitution and has forwarded it to the Synod Mission and Mission Committee for approval.

### **Long Service Leave**

At its November meeting the Council welcomed Craig back after his well-earned long service leave.

### **Safe Church**

The Council has signed the Safe Church Policy. However, in working through the policies and documentation Council had several concerns with wording and is awaiting a response from the Synod Standing Committee to the concerns raised. A Safe Church Awareness Workshop (attended by 21 people) was run after worship on Sunday 25 November. It is a requirement that congregational leaders (holders of Working with Children Checks) attend a workshop if you were unable to attend please see Ann Wilkinson (our Safe Church Contact Person) and she will let you know where and when a workshop is being held.

Comments, queries and suggestions are invited by the Church Council: Gaye Champion (Chair, Hotham Mission), Michael Champion (Elder), Belinda Hopper (Elder and Secretary), Gus MacAulay (Elder), Rod Mummery (Elder and Treasurer), Tim O'Connor (Elder and Chair), Maureen Postma (Elder), Craig Thompson (Minister) and Alan Wilkinson (MTEFP Coordinator).

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## **Eumeralla, a requiem for war and peace**

by Mary Sutherland

The finale of this year's Port Fairy Spring Music Festival was this requiem, presented as a solemn ceremony to lay to rest the spirits of the men, women and children massacred at Eumeralla 170 years ago. A mixed audience of about 500 indigenous and non-indigenous Australians listened spellbound to this premiere performance in the basketball stadium.

Deborah Cheetham AO, the composer, said she had a feeling of inescapable restlessness as she visited the massacre site of the Gunditjmara in 2013 among the lava flows near Mount Eccles in Western Victoria. The voices of those lost were so loud she could not stay for more than one night and couldn't sleep. It aroused in her a



desire to write a requiem to be sung in the Gunditjmara language but to be sung by non-indigenous and indigenous Australians as brothers and sisters together.

She writes that "it is her hope that this will help the spirits of those who fell, and their aggressors, to find a lasting peace so that we, their descendants, might find our way to a deeper understanding of the legacy of these battles ... this will break the silence of so many decades and serve to amplify the importance of our nations' shared history."

The process of composing Eumeralla began with the Latin text of the requiem. But as Benjamin Britten had found before her, Deborah Cheetham found she had to go beyond the original text to honour the Aboriginal context. She said "The turning point came in writing the Agnes Dei, confronting the image of the Lamb of God sacrificed in order to take away the sins of the world – I was confronted by the inescapable truth of our shared history. It was after all Aboriginal people who were sacrificed for the lambs."

For the audience this pivotal message was overwhelming and compelling together with the idea that the settlers "cast us aside unknown." They didn't even try to understand the first people, to make way for their sheep and lambs.

This requiem is a powerful voice for reconciliation by recognising some of the horror of our shared history. As Deborah Cheetham said "either side of my family could have been involved in this massacre" and that is a constructive starting point.

Eumeralla Requiem was sung for the first time in the country of the Gunditjmara at Port Fairy and will be performed in Melbourne at the end of Education Week in June 2019 with the MSO at Hamer Hall. We urge everyone to go to hear this very fine, confronting but reconciling requiem.

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## Alec Wearing

Emeritus Professor Alec Wearing passed away on June 18 2018. Alec was a lodestar for the School of Psychological Science, University of Melbourne, who inspired and guided many generations of academic colleagues and students over a period of almost half a century.

Alec was also a long-standing member of the Congregation of Mark the Evangelist. His generosity of spirit will live on via the donations made in his name to Hotham Mission on his passing. The donations will contribute to the running of the Homework Clubs run by Hotham Mission, providing a structured environment for disadvantaged young students to complete their homework and, perhaps more importantly, foster their interest and commitment to pursuing their education and to be the best version of themselves'.

"Lord, slow me down.  
Take my foot off the accelerator,  
And guide it, gently, to the brake.  
Cool my overheated mind, slow my heartbeat.  
Tell me again, and again,  
that the world, your world,  
will quite possibly survive  
without my frantic support.  
Remind me that it's not my great endeavour  
that keeps the earth's foundations firm.  
But yours."  
Prayer by Eddie Askew



Alec Wearing's grave with the green wheat stalks placed on the front by family members at Moonta cemetery S.A. on Saturday 29th September

## Meet the new Community Development Coordinator

by Joey Rebakis



I have recently started in the Community Development role for Hotham Mission and I'm greatly looking forward to the opportunity.

I have worked for a number of years in the homelessness sector where I witnessed the complexity of this issue and the toll it can take, particularly the difficulty of living a life in extreme poverty. Prior to this, I had the privilege of working with asylum seekers in Melbourne, Christmas Island and Nauru hearing their stories and witnessing their incredible hope, strength, humour and resilience.

As for an update of the goings on at Hotham Mission, the Food for Thought program has been running well throughout the year and continues to assist disadvantaged young people and their families in the local community access essential food. Operating successfully with the continued support and collaboration of church, local schools, community centres and council.

The Food for Thought program is also continuing its collaboration with St. Josephs Flexible Learning Centre, in which students actively participate in the Food for Thought program. Somewhat similar to work experience, to build confidence and practical life skills.

In preparation for Christmas, the Food for Thought program is also providing hampers to local families. The Christmas hampers whilst still including basic food staples, will include some additional festive items to assist those most at need to be able to acknowledge and celebrate Christmas with a sense of dignity, respect and empowerment.

The education support programs continue to be successful and well received due to the hard work of all involved, with a special thank you to all the volunteers for their tireless efforts.

I look forward to 2019, where I'm sure everyone involved with Hotham Mission will all do their utmost to promote and grow the programs in the New Year!

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## Safe Church Training

by Ann Wilkinson

On Sunday 24 November, Safe Church Training was conducted at Mark the Evangelist for 21 persons. These included 13 persons who have Working with Children Cards as they are in leadership positions. Of the 21 persons present, 8 were Church Councillors (100% of the Church Council), another 5 were in other positions of leadership, 6 were interested members of the congregation, and 2 were visitors from other congregations. The training was conducted by Anne Kim who is the Child Safe Officer with our Presbytery.

The training went for 2 hours with a break for lunch. A great deal was learned, and discussion was lively. It is the kind of training from which all members of the congregation would benefit and which they would find stimulating. We will need to run another training in the middle of next year particularly for some in the congregation with Working with Children Cards who were unable to attend this training. As with the training just held, any person from the congregation would be welcome. With many in the congregation now trained, we expect to conduct further training ourselves.

Remember that the congregation has appointed Ann Wilkinson as the Safe Church Contact person. You can approach Ann at any time with any questions you may have.

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## Noticeboard

**23 December** A service of Advent carols and readings with Eucharist, 10am.

**25 December** Christmas Day: Worship with Eucharist, **9.30am**

Normal services will continue, 10am, on 30 December and throughout January

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Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this edition (and the earlier 2018 editions) – without you there would be nothing to read! We look forward to your continuing contributions in the year to come.

Special thanks to Anna Hawthorne (Assistant to the Editor, Classic Melbourne) for her invaluable assistance in the production of this issue.

Finally, best wishes for the Christmas Season and may you have a happy and prosperous 2019.



Uniting Church in Australia  
The Congregation of Mark the Evangelist - North Melbourne