



Winter/Spring 2020

Pairings of the season!

It is unusual to have a combination of two newsletters, in this case, Winter and Spring. This is the first pairing.

We all know the reasons why life is different at the present moment.

Our newsletter offers important pieces from Craig, Tim and Alan, whom I thank for their contributions.

From the Minister

by Craig Thompson

I suppose that I'm not alone in being surprised now to be under greater restriction of movement than four months ago when last the Mark the Word was being put together.

'Surprised' is perhaps not quite the word; disappointed, saddened, and even distressed would better characterise the experience of many of how the virus has impacted us personally and as a community. And so we find ourselves holding our breath – metaphorically – for the signs of a change of fortune in the reported numbers of new cases each day. This is because holding our breath – literally – is suffocating us in many different ways.

The breath we hold or for which we gasp is, in the Scriptures, also the spirit which animates us and is God's own: ruach in Old Testament Hebrew and pneuma in New Testament Greek. This spirit not only gives life to any one of us (or to God) but connects those lives to each other: it is the spirit of community and of the body politic and, where there is a rupture of these realities, it is the reconciling Spirit. To 'breathe easy', then, is both to be able to inhale and to share breath; it is to be bound together by spirit. This is what we miss.

It seems that most of us can expect that time will see the air clear and what we miss will be ours again. But a kind of suffocation was the normal of many before all this took the comfortable by surprise, and the old normal will see that gasping continue.

And so the spirit we might look to see return is not yet God's Spirit, for God's Spirit animates not the world we desire but the world as God intends it: a world in which something so fundamental as breathing easy is enjoyed by all.

We look, then, not for the return of the spirit which brought us to where we were six months ago when we might have imagined things weren't too bad. We look rather for the coming of the Spirit who renews the face of the whole earth.

As the days of breathlessness mount, let us pray in and for this Spirit.

News from Church Council

by Tim O'Connor, Chair of Church Council

Although we haven't seen most of you since late March, you have been in our thoughts and prayers, and each of us has been in touch with some of you one way or another – by telephone, email or video meeting, not to forget that short window in July when we could actually make visits. As for Church Council, our video meetings have continued fruitfully but without the usual supper breaks, reminding us to remedy that next month.

We have been very aware of the isolation and challenges that members have been experiencing to different degrees. Council meetings have engaged with pastoral care of the congregation in particular. While elders have undertaken their pastoral duties, and friendships between members are strong, we realise that pastoral care needs to reach further. Please let us know if you have any suggestion for strengthening pastoral care.

Many members have affirmed that the liturgies and sermons prepared and then recorded in the church by Craig for Sunday services have been widely appreciated, while hearing the music of Donald, the singing of Peter and Sarah, and the voices of the readers have all helped to create a sense of upholding congregational worship.

An innovation from Sunday 13 September will be morning tea time by video between 11.15am and midday, which will provide an opportunity to see and connect with each other remotely. As there are a few who do not have ready access to recorded services, Councillors will see that they can be made available to them by home visits when possible when restrictions are eased.

The recent group studies of the Old Testament have continued successfully by video, which has enabled some participants to take part who do not belong to the congregation. Similarly, recorded services have been accessed by more than were expected, indicating visitors to the website beyond the congregation.

Some work of the Congregation has necessarily been put on hold in the past six months, but other work continues including Hotham Mission's food program for the housing commission towers and homework club supervision online. As Church Council we are endeavouring to respond to congregational needs and are watching for opportunities that arise.

Comments, queries and suggestions are invited by the Church Council: Gaye Champion (*Chairperson of Hotham Mission*), Rod Mummery (*Elder and Treasurer*), Tim O'Connor (*Elder and Chairperson*), David Radcliffe (*Elder*), Craig Thompson (*Minister*), Rosemary Wearing (*Elder Nominee*) and Alan Wilkinson (*MTEFP Coordinator*).

What's happening around our Church buildings during the COVID-19 Lockdown?

by Alan Wilkinson, MTEF Project Coordinator

Few of us are spending any time these days around our church and buildings in Elm and Curzon Streets in North Melbourne. So you may be surprised to hear that an Elm Street neighbour has asked what is going on around the Church. In fact, the former children's centre has been a hive of activity for almost three months. How is this happening when we are all supposed to be locked down?

As a result of the COVID-19 restrictions, Autism Partnership was required to find more space in which they could continue to provide essential school services to children with autism. As smaller numbers of children are allowed in their schoolrooms in buildings elsewhere in North Melbourne, Autism Partnership was delighted to discover unused childcare space behind our church. They offered to spend \$60,000 on upgrading and repainting while MtE agreed to some 'landlord' obligations such as replacing the water heater and removing a dead tree in the playground. Up to 14 children are now spending each day in the revamped former children's centre. MtE is working with Synod Property Services and the Legal Department to develop a long-term lease for Autism Partnership. It's great that MtE's unused space can be put to such a good, constructive use during the pandemic.

Craig, Greg and Cindy are all working from home, while Joey and his Hotham Mission colleagues are working with the food program several days a week. Autism Partnership is the only organisation responsible for daily activity around our Church and Office. Meanwhile there is no activity behind the scenes on our Mark the Evangelist Futures Project. That has to wait until we start to gather face-to-face again. However the Union Memorial Church building is being monitored to identify any structural movement. And soil contamination in the Manse garden area is being addressed.

From the Editor

by Suzanne Yanko

My Editorial written for Lynden Retirement Village in August, addresses one aspect of the Pandemic.

Suzanne's Corner

Today, instead of telling you all about me I have 3 wishes which you could make come true:

1. Be more tolerant.
As they keep telling us, we are all in this together. This means, although we are safe and well protected, we are all having a hard time with everything from the breakfast toast to the behaviour of people around us!
This can be petty, but we get upset at people singing or repeating themselves, or shouting, we can even get annoyed by their lurid socks!
Getting angry solves nothing and being mean will not make you feel better!
2. On the positive side, learn more about your fellow residents ... and tell me their stories for this newsletter because everyone has their own story to tell ... as we all found out at an interesting group of show and tell.
You could ask someone if you could write about them or tell us your story.
3. Thank the staff, who have a difficult job at the best of times, let alone going through this pandemic. Help them with the peculiarities of English, ask about their studies or future plans, tell stories about your families or you at their age.

All you need is a genuine interest, as shown every day here at Lynden, and I think following my three suggestions will help you feel we really are all in this ... together!



Remembering the idea of pairings, we now have two more, with articles written by Robert Gribben and Rob Gallacher, followed by, appropriately for Spring, announcements of new life from Benita and Callum, and Stuart and Maria.

We thank them for their eloquent contributions and photos.

The Community of Grandchamp

by Robert Gribben

Most Christians these days have heard of the French Community of Taizé, but few know that their origins lie in a community of women at Grandchamp in Switzerland. Following the disillusionment of the Great War, and the experience of chaplains in providing spiritual support for the soldiers in their care, many pastors were looking for ways of forming communities of prayer and work which would sustain their congregations and their villages. Part of the answer lay in the groups of catechumens (confirmands) who continued to meet. They became the basis for a movement founded by one Pastor, Wilfred Monod (1867-1943) called the *Veilleurs/Veilleuses*, the Watchers, who kept a simple rule of life: around noon each day they promised to read the Beatitudes; on Fridays they copied out a passage of Scripture 'as a homage to Jesus, the Head of the Church, on the day of his crucifixion'. They were to take part in Sunday public worship, and they renewed their catechumenal (confirmation) promises at the beginning of each year. (There had been similar Anglican explorations after the Oxford Movement, and the *Veilleurs* knew about them).



The main street in Grandchamp. The fountain in the middle of the road is a sign that part of the River Areuse flows under the houses to serve the original cottage industry of cloth-dyeing.

In the 1930s, a group of rather genteel and well-educated women began to meet for an annual retreat in an old house in the hamlet of Grandchamp, on the banks of the River Areuse near where it flowed into Lac Neuchâtel. Three of them were pastors' wives. One, Madame Micheli (née de Beaumont) was a young widow (with three children), later Mère Geneviève (1883-1961), the mother foundress. They were all *Veilleuses*. The village itself formed them because of a centuries-old tradition of communal life in service, prayer and hospitality. A Moravian group at the invitation of the seigneurial family had founded a home for

the education of children; the family had set up an industry of cloth dyeing and took in the poor and the mentally-ill, involving them in the practical tasks. The long poles on which the cloth was hung to dry still stretch over the street; under each house a stream of water from the river Areuse flows to rinse the cloth (not easy to sleep near). There is a large two-storied barn, which they call 'l'Arche', the Ark, the upper part gives a beautiful open space for their chapel. Here the *Veilleuses* came. They prayed, read the Bible and lived in the spirit of the Beatitudes. Soon requests to join their retreats meant they occurred more often, until at last they decided to open the house all year. Fr Couturier, founder of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was a friend and there was an ecumenical spirit from the start.

In the late 1930s, two theological students would come for retreat and prayer. Roger Schütz was studying theology at Lausanne, and Max Thurian at Geneva. Roger's interests (partly because of a small group within the SCM of which he was president) were already ecumenical and he was exploring forms of prayer long abandoned in Protestant Switzerland. Max was already interested in liturgical renewal and eucharistic theology. When war broke out, around 1940, they lived in a farmhouse which Roger had bought in a small village in Burgundy called Taizé, and helped refugees from nearby Vichy France, mostly Jews, to escape to freedom.



Inside 'L'Arche' (the Ark), the Community's chapel. Seating is on the floor, on prayer-stools. Music is a capella.

They also kept their patterns of prayer. They had to escape themselves from German aggression, to Geneva and further study, and afterwards, to the farmhouse. Roger was ordained in 1943, and he and Max regularly visited the Sisters at Grandchamp. The Rule of Taizé was published in 1953; the influence of the Veilleuses and of Pastor Monod is obvious. In 1952, the first Sisters adopted the same Rule, took life vows, constituting a kind of 'double-community'. They also have a special relationship with the Little Sisters of Jesus and wear a similar simple habit.

I first encountered Grandchamp Sisters in 1983-4 when two of them and I formed a team 'animating the prayers' for the WCC Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Lausanne. There was daily prayer and frequent eucharists in the chapel of the adjoining château Soeur Heidi (Swiss!) was a phenomenon. A master of languages, a born musician and teacher, she taught us to join her – at a note – in responses in Greek, Russian, Romanian, Swahili, Xhosa, Indonesian, Urdu, as well as the three required languages (everybody had to have one, tutors two) of English, French and German. She also danced. Her companions, Soeur Christel, being Swiss (German), knew the European languages, but was more reserved. As presbyter, approved by the cantonal church, I found myself presiding in multiple languages, only needing to glance at Heidi to add appropriate music, especially at the eucharist. It is a liturgical experience I will never forget. We included Roman Catholics and Orthodox as fully as we could; on the whole we abstained at each other's eucharist, but at the Vatican later, we received a joint ticking – off from Pope John-Paul who had been told of our occasional lapses.

The whole school visited both Grandchamp and Taizé, and met the remarkable prioress, Soeur Minke, a redoubtable Netherlander (co-founder of Bose), who was at the Canberra WCC Assembly in 1991. We stayed in the village as a family over one wintry Christmas. On several visits I used to walk to the nearby village of Boudry to visit an ancient professor of liturgy. Only later did I discover that my Swiss ancestors, who emigrated to Geelong in 1844, were mayors and magistrates (Mâitre-bourgeois et Justicier) of that very village, for generations.

Travelling North

by Rob Gallacher

Locked in, and staring at winter outside, I wonder, was it only last year that we were free to chase the sun? "Where haven't we been?" we asked. "What about a week in Rockhampton?" "And we could add a few days in Brisbane to meet an icon writer there". It sounded good. So off we went. On our return I wrote these reflections.

We had little idea of the character of Rockhampton. We had heard it was the centre of the beef industry, but we couldn't find a steak house anywhere. Perhaps the drought was having an effect. Rockhampton was not on water restrictions, as it draws water from the Fitzroy River. Nevertheless there was a notice on the bathroom door to limit showers to 4 minutes. One impression of the business district was created by the very large, well-stocked, clothing stores, with everything except customers. Maybe on-line shopping was adding to drought woes.

Rockhampton has a proud history. The river was navigable to this point, so, before road and rail, it was the access point for central Queensland. Towards the end of the 19th century it was pressing for recognition as the capital of a state of North Queensland, but federation happened instead. The size of the port is reflected in the Custom House. Its dome still dominates the skyline. Its architecture is grand, classical and impressive. It is just a pity that by the time it was built the port was declining.

The Anglican Cathedral is fenced off. Years ago the roof blew off in a cyclone. When repairs began the west wall moved and the whole structure was considered dangerous. There was not enough money to continue. Never the less, the 16 elderly people present at Sunday morning service were stoutly optimistic. "We expect to be back in our Cathedral by Christmas" and "We will bring this place to life again. Pray for us." It seemed unrealistic and depressing. By contrast, at the Art Gallery we encountered vibrant enthusiastic young people. They were very excited because, on that very day, the bulldozers were arriving on their new site, adjacent to the Custom House. From state and federal grants, money from the Arts Council, and local fund raising they had amassed \$31 million. The new Art Gallery will be fittingly prestigious. However it seemed to me that the art itself was vacuous. The star piece was a still life by Margaret Olley – several pots and a dry arrangement – perfectly executed, but what was it saying? The rest of the paintings were by local artists indulging themselves in self-expression, products of the "me" generation. I could see nothing of transcendent significance, and I wonder how sustainable this will be. Will the story of the Art Gallery echo that of the Custom House? Bishop John Bayton introduced me to icon painting, through classes when he was at St. Peters in East Melbourne. He was Dean of Rockhampton in the 70s. His name is still held in very high esteem. There is a Bayton prize for local artists, \$15,000 every second year.

At the Cathedral we met a lady whose wedding was conducted by John. She idolised him, and when we said we wanted to see John's icons, she found a way for us to get into the unsafe building. In those glory days, John had been able to move among the civic leaders, and give the church a significant place in society.

There were enough places of interest for us to have somewhere to go every day – the Zoo, Botanic Gardens, Art Gallery, Tram and Train Museum, Heritage Village, waterfront buildings. Some appealed more than others. Many were within walking distance. Rather than hire a car, we took taxis.

In Brisbane I was very glad I was not driving. The steep slopes of Spring Hill and the narrow lanes around the bends in the river were best left to someone else. At the Art Gallery there was an exhibition of Ben Quilty's work. His impasto technique is astounding, but more importantly, he has something to say. For example, he painted one of Streeton's peaceful Australian landscapes and then splashed the word "Afghanistan" across it. What a scar on the Australian psyche. Next to it was a self-portrait entitled "After Afghanistan", and it is a picture of lost innocence. In the next room were paintings by Margaret Olley. There I discovered she was a very generous person. We saw her writing a cheque for \$1 million to help with the purchase of a painting that cost the gallery \$13 million. "How many noughts do I need? Goodness, I've run out of room!"

One aspect of our trip was how nice people can be. For example, we wanted a coffee on Saturday afternoon, but everything was closed. Eventually we entered a corner shop. It turned out to be a hotel bar. The barman politely explained that they did not sell coffee, so we left. We had got about 50 metres down the street when we heard the barman calling after us. He then sent us another way, to the Boat House. There we found a quartet from Rockhampton's Symphony Orchestra giving a free open-air concert, while we sat and drank coffee. It was a highlight we would otherwise have missed.

Sunday service in the Brisbane Anglican Cathedral was conducted with dignity, sung in Latin, with a powerful pipe organ. However all was not as it first seemed. The two lady priests conducting the service were extremely progressive. The congregation has almost halved since they came out in favour of gay marriage. The sermon was preached by the secretary of Queensland Churches Together on the Gospel reading about Christ bringing not peace but a sword. He ended by advocating respect for different points of view and the conduct of

reasonable debate. I wondered to whom his words were chiefly directed. It takes \$1 million a year to run the Cathedral, and a diminishing congregation means financial stress.

On Monday morning I met my Anglican contact who has an icon in Brisbane's Cathedral and was a student in John Bayton's school in Melbourne. He has produced a book on the architecture of the Cathedral and now is writing about the art work there. He was a fount of information and appreciative of my contribution. My awkwardness was that he kept asking me to make a judgement on this or that icon or picture, something iconographers do not do. I could only make comment about style, colour and proportion and say if the icon spoke to me.

Overall the trip was an enjoyable and satisfying experience, and a whole 11 days without seeing a doctor! For me, the highlight was sitting in the sun by the river in shirt sleeves and enjoying Norma's company. This I can of course do while locked in, but somehow it is not quite the same.

NOTE: The Rockhampton Anglican Cathedral was reopened in January this year. Photos show that the west wall is now supported by large, external, steel buttresses. There appears to be scaffolding in some other parts, and an official service of dedication is planned for 2021.

Edith Maeve Dawlings

by Benita Champion



Edith was born in late March, born into this strange world, strange at the best of times, and even stranger now with the restrictions brought by Covid-19. She brought with her love, joy and all the challenges of a newborn. But in this time, the grief of lost opportunities has been severe. Not only are people unable to show her their love through smiles and cuddles, but all her little growths have not been seen in person by those who love her. Although video calls are great, they definitely do not compare to the caring love of a cuddle, the slow afternoon watching a little one's continuous movement as they strive for their next development, and the physicality of being together with family and friends. But the slow and isolated life does provide ample time for our family to talk to

Edith, play with her and see all her moments of development, to grow together throughout this time.

Charles Noel Watson

by Stuart Watson



Maria and I are pleased to introduce our son Charles Noel to the Congregation of Mark the Evangelist. Charles is thriving, and Maria has recovered well.

Presently I am working in Geelong and returning to Melbourne for weekends. While it is unfortunate that I am less able to help Maria, it does afford me a particular appreciation for the speed of Charles' development. Now three months old, he loves nursery rhymes, battles with tummy time, enjoys walks and is learning to express his opinion.

As one can imagine, the coronavirus and its associated lockdowns has had a significant impact on the way we have been living. While I have continued working, Maria has been confined to the house and experiences cabin fever in my absence. My parents in particular are upset by how little they have been able to visit their only grandchild, and my mother worries that she may not be able to make up lost ground. Nevertheless, we shall do the best we can and we look forward to seeing you all soon.

I wish to thank Rod and Rosemary for their hard work getting this newsletter together, and to introduce John Hood as a new team member. His musical knowledge was invaluable as you may have heard with the Beethoven sonata.



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