



Summer 2019

Welcome to our summer Christmas issue, which has no particular theme but plenty to interest you as we have found!

(Rod Mummery, producer; Rosemary Wearing, deputy editor; and myself, Suzanne Yanko, editor.)

We begin with news and issues and, as usual, Craig has the first word.

From the Minister

by Craig Thompson

Advent is nominally a time for 'waiting'. Our Scripture readings in this season speak of a future anticipated. Yet, the very fact that we have these texts hinges on the thing awaited already having come: the 'Messiah' is the crucified Jesus who speaks in those texts.

This is to say that how a Christian 'waits' is not how others might. We wait for something which has already happened. While children and department store shareholders look forward to Christmas, Christmas cannot properly be Christmas without looking back.

There is a difference with respect to Christmas, however. Not all things are worth remembering and, among those that are, little we remember matters beyond our personal remembering. What is remembered in Christmas is not a thing which might have been different or even eventually forgotten but the occurrence of that which we, even now, continually strain to see: our very selves. Christmas, with all the seasons of the church's year, participates in the conviction that in Jesus we see the 'last Adam' – a summing up of the heart of what it means and looks like to be a human being in a world like this, before a God like One who placed us here.

What we wait for – look for, work for, pray for – is the realisation of this kind of humanity in ourselves. And so, each week, we move through the whole of the church's year in the liturgy – the 'adventic', invocatory call to God, the coming of the Word in the hearing of Scripture and the preaching, bringing the cross which convicts of sin in the light of the resurrection by divine grace, and then the coming of the Spirit to realise the Body of Christ – true human being – in the Eucharist. And then we do it all over again the next week. Christmas – and the rest of it – every Sunday of the year. For ours is the time of God's coming, so that we do not wait for any new thing, other than that which we have already seen.

It is sometimes observed that we should not sing Christmas carols in Advent – much to the consternation of those who remember a church life before we knew about Advent. But the question is not so much why we don't sing Christmas carols in Advent as why we don't sing them – or some of them, at least! – at many other times of the year. Perhaps a little more of that in 2020!

This Christmas may it be yours to receive what you are truly waiting for.

Craig's words are followed by Tim, as Council Chair, and Ann as Culture of Safety Contact Person.

News from Church Council

by Tim O'Connor, Chair of Church Council

Mark the Evangelist Futures Project

The Project's Property Control Group provided Church Council in December with the findings of a review to establish whether the Project based on the Congregation's preferred Property Option 5a+ remained robust in both practical and financial terms. The review's report concluded that Option 5a+ as well as other property development options previously considered were not robust, noting that 'it is becoming apparent that MtE is precluded from continuing its MTEFP Option 5a+ with an Elm Street frontage'. MTEFP Coordinator Alan Wilkinson outlined factors which have caused projected gross revenue to be lower and subdivision and other costs considerably higher than had been anticipated 12 months ago.

A new proposal will assess developing Union Memorial Church for mixed purposes while maintaining the Elm Street Church for worship services. Options for moving off site will also be considered. Church Council will receive proposal(s) through the MtE Finance and Property Committee and will make recommendations to a congregational meeting at a future stage. We will keep you well informed.

Focuses for Mission and Ministry in 2020

A Congregational Meeting on 24 November adopted 'Focuses for Mission and Ministry for 2020' prepared by Church Council for the Congregation's approval which contains initiatives to be undertaken next year beside statements of objectives in mission and ministry. Church Council will report progress on the initiatives during the year and involve the Congregation in feedback and discussion on some of them after worship on occasions.

Safe Church Awareness Workshop

This training workshop was held from midday on Sunday 27 October in the former children's centre and was well attended by members of Mark the Evangelist who were required or interested to participate as well as by a few members of other UCA congregations. Church Council agreed that a neighbouring congregation be invited to host training next year and that such workshops be offered annually to participants in our region of Melbourne.

Comments, queries and suggestions are invited by the Church Council: Gaye Champion (Chair, Hotham Mission), Benita Champion (Elder), Andrew Gador-Whyte (Elder), Gus MacAulay (Elder), Rod Mummery (Elder and Treasurer), Tim O'Connor (Elder and Chair), David Radcliffe (Elder), Craig Thompson (Minister) and Alan Wilkinson (MTEFP Coordinator).

Keeping Children Safe

by Ann Wilkinson

Following the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the Congregation of Mark the Evangelist has taken several steps to ensure that we keep children and vulnerable adults safe.

Our objectives are to ensure that we:

- Promote a culture of child safety through our leadership and governance,
- Promote access, equity and diversity as we deal with each other,
- Encourage appropriate behaviour,
- Recruit, train and supervise our employees well,
- Manage risk, promote safety and respond to concerns,
- Facilitate child, family and community participation.

With these objectives in mind, we have over the past 12 months conducted two workshops, training around 40 of our leaders, employees and volunteers. Several interested members of our congregation have also attended these workshops. We hope that many more congregational members will decide to attend future workshops which we will conduct each year.

The Role of Culture of the Safety Contact Person

Church Council has appointed me as the Culture of Safety Contact Person to support this important work in the congregation.

Please feel free to chat with me at any time if you have any ideas or concerns. It is important that every member of our congregation understands our evolving approach to Keeping Children Safe.

Ann Wilkinson

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More personal pieces come from Mary on the Mathison sisters and David's writing on Vicki and their recent Purdue University visit.

Conversations in the Congregation

by Mary Sutherland



When Peggy and Barbara Mathison give you your coffee after church you probably have no inkling of their far-flung nursing careers.

The sisters grew up on the family farm near St Arnaud where the family seemed to know everyone in the district. Their father had been born in a 2 roomed mudbrick hut but their grandfather was eaten off that farm at John Bull Creek by rabbits. The first official rabbit catcher in Victoria was employed there and rabbit catching was a continuing theme as they grew up. With their brother Allan they went first to the local one teacher school and then to St Arnaud High School.

When Peggy left school in 1958 she joined the CBC of Sydney Bank in St Arnaud and worked there for 6 years.

In 1960 Barbara left school and started her nursing training at The Austin Hospital, and worked there until 1968. She then worked in Mt Isa, then in Thursday Island for six months. This opened up wider horizons and she nursed for a year in an African Hospital in Zambia before moving to Leeds where she worked and completed her midwifery training.

In 1964 Peggy left the bank and went as a mature aged student to do nursing training at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Melbourne. After working as a staff nurse she went back to the St Arnaud Hospital, and then she went overseas. After a period working in South Africa, Amsterdam and London she came back to work in the Alice Springs Hospital (babies and children's ward). She then returned to Melbourne to QVH to complete midwifery and this was followed by a long period working in the Northern Territory.

To follow her movements you need a large map of Australia – Peggy was working in some of the blank spaces. She was part of a Rural Mobile team working south and west of Alice Springs out on the road for 3 days at a time. On Monday they would equip themselves and set everything up. On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday they would be out on cattle stations or remote communities and Friday was a massive cleanup and repair operation. Sometimes when they broke down way out in the spinifex Aboriginal men would suddenly appear saying "Sister, we good fellas. Now we fixum!"

From this work she was sent by the Northern Territory Government to an International Conference in Kenya Investigating Rural Mobile Nursing Services. Later she worked for some years at the Community Health Centre at Warrabri Native Settlement south of Tennant Creek. When she finally decided it was time to leave Peggy was honoured to be given a very special gift of precious witchetty grubs by the women. Later back in Melbourne Peggy worked at Lalor Community Health Centre, worlds away from the Northern Territory but equally diverse and challenging.

Meanwhile Barbara had gone to and fro between Australia and Europe several times including going by the overland route. She finally settled in Adelaide where she lived for 30 years. There she was involved in school health services and also became a Podiatrist. Then in 2005 she became a Grey Nomad, always travelling on secondary roads as she explored remote parts of NSW, NT and Queensland. Sometimes she became involved in local projects or worked, like the 8 months she spent in an Aged Care Hostel in Darwin. There the old experiences of rabbiting became useful common ground with shy Aboriginal people stuck in town.

In 2010 when Peggy started having tough treatment for cancer Barbara came back to Melbourne to support her. When Peggy finally made a good recovery Barbara headed off to Kununurra where she became involved in a mobile program assisting local Aboriginal people. Long experience of Aboriginal ways of doing things helped her rely on their vital insights into who really needed help and to cope with their less mainstream views on other matters.

Then Barbara fell and suffered a fracture to her lower back. Peggy headed off to Kununurra and helped Barbara sell her beloved vehicle and bring her back to Melbourne. Now Peggy is fully retired (though she still loves going to her cousin's farm near Birchip to help with the lambs.) Barbara is a volunteer 2 days a week at Mount Royal Geriatric Slow Rehab and provided a familiar face for friends like Norah and John Killip when they were there.

So when you collect your tea of coffee ask Peggy and Barbara about their adventures!

Coming back to Earth

by David Radcliffe

For nine years from Aug 2007, Vicki and I lived in West Lafayette, Indiana. It is archetypal mid-west, heartland USA – flat landscapes carpeted by endless fields of corn and soybeans, friendly industrious people, socially conservative. For many it is "fly-over" country between the two coasts.

The move to America was our "empty nester" adventure. I had been hired as a Professor in a brand-new program at Purdue, a land grant university with an global reputation in engineering. Due to visa restrictions, Vicki was unable to seek paid employment so she volunteered in the office at First United Methodist Church (FUMC) and was very active in the Purdue Women's Club (PWC). In 2014-15 she became the President of this 500-member club. We made lasting friendships in Indiana.

In September this year we returned to the US and to Lafayette for the first time since we came back to Australia in 2016 to build our new life in Melbourne. We had been invited back to participate in celebrations linked to the 150th anniversary of Purdue, focused on the history of the School which I had headed there and the pioneering programs that preceded it. We were there for just one week.

We got to catch up with many colleagues and friends at Purdue and the wider community. On the Wednesday evening, Vicki enjoyed reconnecting with her knit and natter group of ladies at FUMC called Hands@Work. Fittingly the former pastor whom we knew well, was the visiting preacher the Sunday we were in town. We had a really enjoyable week visiting old haunts as well as seeing some exciting new developments that are reshaping the town. It was warm, sunny, early Fall weather, like March in Melbourne.

Purdue is known as the 'Cradle of the Astronauts'; its alumni include Neil Armstrong and Gene Cernan, the first and the most recent (rather than last) person to walk on the moon. We were privileged to dine with both Neil and Gene during our years at Purdue. While the flight back to Australia is not as long nor the seating arrangements quite as cramped as those on the moon mission, nevertheless we were brought back to earth with a thud when we returned home.

An MRI scan revealed the underlying cause of the various aches and pains, and more lately a stiff neck that had been troubling Vicki over the past six months or so. Our worst fears confirmed; after 16 years in abeyance her breast cancer had returned.

While the news was a big shock, Vicki has now settled into the weekly routine of treatment, supported by the overwhelming love of our family and friends globally.

We feel blessed to have had our week in Lafayette with our friends. Like the original opportunity to move there in 2007, this trip came somewhat out of the blue but we are so pleased that we accepted the invitation.

Every year for the past 9 years, our congregation has had a healthy representation at the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival. We look at what was on offer this year, thanks to Classic Melbourne, and Ann puts the festival in the context of their annual pilgrimage.

O Brave New World

by Julie McErlain

The Port Fairy Spring Music Festival began its 30th Year with all the stops pulled out to celebrate new horizons and a brave new world of fine music under the new direction of Monica Curro and Stefan Cassomenos. At first glance, the weekend of October 13-15 offered another stimulating and inventive program which has had a "Sold Out" sign on almost every festival event year after year. The intimate venues in this bright and unique coastal community welcomes the outstanding visiting artists, and this year's event seemed to pay homage to strings, piano and voice. A second read showed a highly conceptualised theme of "Emergence" and "New Beginnings", origins and growth, World Premier performances, and a refreshing, spiritually engaging, commitment to new journeys in music performance.

With a Friday night opening Gala performance in a packed Reardon Theatre, some fine music lovers may have expected bright festivity, and so the quiet emergence of Cassamenos walking in silence to the grand piano to begin at the beginning, with the First of the Vingt Regards sur l'enfant Jesus (Messiaen) with its slow, soft and deep chord clusters and high bell-like octaves, was a sensitive, profound and serious moment of solitude and wonder. Timeless. Curro emerged to develop the melodic, sumptuous conversation in the Adagio molto espressivo 2nd movement from Spring Sonata Op24. (Beethoven). Joined by cellist Michael Dahlenburg, Ravel's Piano Trio allowed the sonorities to grow further as harmonics, double stopped trills and changing time signatures added the dramatic contrast of extreme pitch ranges in this technically advanced work. Wiradjuri soprano Shauntai Batzke's new artistic compositions were a feature of both the opening and closing concerts in this year's Festival, showing a colourful and gentle panorama of vocalising and Aboriginal languages, balancing both simplicity and denser chordal textures. Cultural strength, simple beauty, peace and harmony emerged. The unifying elements of this seemingly disparate opening program spoke clearly. Thought provoking.

There was a wide choice for lovers of fresh young string players. The exciting, ethereal and inventive Adelaide Zephyr quartet performed original works, the Orava Quartet performed a culturally diverse program – (Kats-Chernin, Mozart, Rachmaninov, Shostakovich, Kilar) and were later joined by Stefan Cassomenos for the contrasting genres *La Creation du Monde* (Milhaud) and *Piano Quintet Op 44* (Schumann). With music by Beethoven, Gesualdo, Part and Ligeti, the Partridge Quartet showed they can bring works from any era to new life. In the beautiful St John's Church, they performed two more programs being two cycles of Richard Mills String Quartets. This energetic composer was very present at the festival as composer, conductor, part entertainer and supportive audience member.

Artistic Director Monica Curro is dedicated to promoting women composers in music making, and so we saw many contemporary compositions by women in several of the 28 listed events in the festival. One such tribute was the tribute to publisher Louise Hanson-Dyer, with works by Peggy Glanville-Hicks and Margaret Sutherland performed by mezzo-soprano Dimity Shepherd and pianist Caroline Almonte. Caroline demonstrated exceptionally sympathetic and intuitive accompanying for the gorgeous soprano Lee Abrahmsen in a delectable late night "Parisienne soiree" in a finely contrasted program of art-songs by Poulenc and Debussy. The inclusion of a glass of wine as a warming treat for the audience was most welcome, and we were fully enticed by Abrahmsen's rich, full-bodied voice and expression, bell-like notes and crystal-clear diction. Most charming and musically sensitive.

The Drill Hall was fully booked out twice for Lunch with soprano, and more recently, broadcaster Greta Bradman, and for the night owls and jazz lovers who relaxed to the endearing and tasteful creative lines of jazz singer Michelle Nicolle. With a wide vocal range and imaginative phrasing, and a very cool backing group of drums, bass and guitar, her ballads were very pleasant, warm and sensitive. The improvisations were smooth, safe and secure, totally contrasting with the more avant-garde free style of jazz trio Trichotomy Twenty.

The new artistic directors masterminded an increase in community events this year. The brilliant animated films *Magic Piano* and *Chopin Shorts* were a fantastic free event for local school children. Again, there were no empty seats for the two Friday daytime sessions, and the students were totally enthralled in the magic of the screen and the live performance of Chopin's *Etudes* by pianist Yigun Gu. The synchronisation of the action with the storm and calm of Chopin's score was simply thrilling and engaging for young and old. The annual inclusion of the Pop-Up recital space with a Grand Piano in The Hub café always provides a relaxed venue for all comers to meet, mingle and make music and Piano masterclasses again were highly welcomed by local students. Another surprise free event was the addition of *Words about Music* – two lunchtime interviews with the Festival guest, brilliant author and musicologist Paul Kildea by Monica Curro. Their interaction was most welcome.

The new directors described the Saturday night Gala concert as "the jewel in the crown" in the Festival. With the renovated Southcombe Park Stadium offering a surprisingly good acoustic (with much credit going to the annual expert technical crew), 150 performers from the Western Region's community orchestras and choirs teamed with professional visiting artists and soloists to perform a dynamic Orff *O Fortuna*, Beethoven 9th Symphony (4th Mov't), and Cassomenos *In the Beginning*. All rehearsed and conducted by the magnificent amiable Richard Mills. In this venue Sunday's closing Gala concert, we heard a hugely colourful premier of a second New Work by Shauntai Batzke before the extraordinary and dramatic *Song of The Earth* (Mahler) with huge "sing" by Lian Keegan and James Egglestone and an exceptional chamber ensemble of shining soloists and sparkling celeste.

My festival highlight has to be the showpiece of near perfection by cellist Michael Dahlenburg and pianist Stefan Cassomenos, whose Schumann *Five Pieces Op 102* and Grieg's *Sonata in A minor* were exceptional in every technical detail and passionate expression. Our hearts and souls were moved and enriched by this magnificent music.

Julie McErlain attended much (but not all) of the Festival to give this overview for Classic Melbourne; we admire her stamina. We also applaud the vision of Curro, Cassomenos and Mills, for creating between the three of them such a memorable festival.

Why do we keep returning to Port Fairy every October?

by Ann and Alan Wilkinson

Every year for a weekend at the beginning of October, we go to the Spring Music Festival at Port Fairy. There are two main reasons for our visit, apart from Port Fairy being a beautiful place to visit and spend some time.

Our visits began in 2010 with a group of 16 friends. Since then, each year we rent two houses near to each other to accommodate us all, one of which is an ideal size for the whole group to eat together. The nature of this group is one of the main reasons we return each year. It consists mainly of couples who migrated from Western Australia to one of the eastern states from around 1970, as did we. Many of them had spouses from other states or in one case from overseas. Most of the West Australians were at university together and belonged to the Australian Student Christian Movement (ASCM). Others in the group belonged to the ASCM in other states and many met up at National Conferences each summer.

Before our Port Fairy sojourns and from the early 70s when we all had dependent children, many of us met for a camping reunion each year. As a result, the children also got to know each other and some of those friendships continue to this day. There have been a few changes, and we are all a lot older of course, but the core group is still much the same.

The Port Fairy Festival begins on a Friday evening, and we all arrive the day before to catch up before the concerts begin. Similarly, at the end of the Festival on Sunday afternoon we all remain until the next morning to share our experiences and our plans for the future, and further enjoy each other's company.

The second reason for our regular returns is of course the music. This Festival has been held every year for 30 years. It is launched in Melbourne in August after which booking begins. With it becoming more popular each year, bookings need to be made promptly as popular concerts fill up quickly. Sometimes this means booking from afar, as when we were in France one year or this year in WA, but on both occasions we were thoroughly motivated to act quickly, testing our online skills!

Our very first festival in 2010 is still a great memory – The Seraphim Quartet played a Schubertiade, the Adelaide Singers a Ring Tone Cycle, and Peter Goldsworthy led his Mass for the Middle Aged. The Festival each year has a theme. This year it was **Emergence** in which concerts explored our origins, songs and stories of beginnings, and how things come into being. The pattern is much the same each year. Each day there are 7 one-hour long concert slots with a choice of two concerts in each slot. Some of our group fill up most of the slots, others instead spend more time together or explore the town and its environs. Some of the music is new, some is traditional classical chamber music. Some of the artists are established and well known to the audience, others are incredibly talented emerging artists.

We remain very grateful to have a group of such good and long-standing friends with whom we also have such rich shared interests. At the end of the Festival we all slot the dates for the next year into our diaries and everyone signs up for another year when we will all meet up again.

Does this help you to better understand why we are keen to return to Port Fairy every year?

Finally, after Ann's review, a quick look at the notice board, at what is coming up for MtE, and thanks to Rosemary and Rod for their efforts in ensuring we get the newsletter out before the Big Event.

Noticeboard

22 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 29 December and throughout January

26 February 2020 Ash Wednesday: Imposition of ashes with Eucharist, 6pm.

Lenten Studies 2020

7pm Wednesdays March 4, 11, 18, 25 and April 1.

Details available on the website.

We wish you all a blessed and happy Christmas and what you pray for in 2020!



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