



Winter 2016

### From the Editor

*Shakespeare's words from the play Richard III, "Now is the winter of our discontent", have a resonance for us at Mark the Evangelist, as we grapple with problems of buildings and money and decision-making – and all in dreary weather! But the next lines are too often ignored and the mood changes hugely when they are included:*

*Now is the winter of our discontent  
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;  
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house  
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.  
Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths;  
Our bruised arms hung up for monuments;  
Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,  
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.*

*What is our "sun" (or "son") that can bring about this "glorious summer"? This month's Mark the Word suggests the answer is partly, "we, the congregation are"! One thing that has emerged is our sense of solidarity as a congregation, trust in Craig and each other, with a pride in our history and a determination to find the best solution to our present dilemma. Let's step aside from debate for a moment and affirm the leadership and community – and mission – that is Mark the Evangelist.*  
Suzanne Yanko

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### Vale Elizabeth Brown

by Wendy Langmore



The passing of Elizabeth Sutherland Brown is an occasion of great sadness. All of us who knew her feel a sense of personal loss. She was an outstanding educator. Her life was a life of leadership to the education system, of love of family, dedication to God and service to people. It is a life of personal example and indeed one of inspiration. Even in her latter years she was a lively, bright-eyed and down to earth woman, living happily in Mercy Place, a retirement home in Parkville, and attending Mark the Evangelist when she could.

She was born in Melbourne on 29th April 1921, the eldest child of Catherine McLean and Francis Taylor. She was baptised in the Union Memorial Presbyterian Church at North Melbourne, her grandmother's church, where her mother had gone as a child.

She grew up with her two sisters in a War Service home in the far outer suburb of – Caulfield. These homes had been available on good terms for returned servicemen, with the family eligible on account of her father’s service during the First World War as an Infantry soldier with the 21st Battalion, 1st AIF.

Her primary school years were spent at Caulfield State School and Caulfield South School in the 1920s. Her secondary education commenced at Elwood Central, then, after sitting the entrance exam and achieving the top score, gained entry into McRobertson Girls High School.

Betty said that McRobertson “was run by giants of women.” For her, the most influential was McRobertson principal, Mary Hutton, a high achieving, scholarly woman, and the first to have the title of ‘Principal’ within Victorian State secondary system. Mary Hutton was a significant influence on an impressionable young Betty.

She left school at the end of year 10, which was fairly normal for children of Betty’s background. She gained employment in a soul-destroying job in a basement office on Flinders Lane, but intervention by Miss Hutton was a turning point for her. Miss Hutton arranged a job for her as Title Office Clerk at a local law firm.

This generosity in mentoring was, no doubt, borne out of what Miss Hutton saw of herself in Betty – intelligent, strong faith, comparable upbringing, a diminutive physical stature (both pushing the upper limits of 4ft 11ins), and most importantly – a passion for education. The opportunity provided by Miss Hutton enabled Betty to get on with the career she really wanted to pursue – teaching.

While working in the Solicitors Office, Elizabeth continued her studies at night, matriculating in 1941, at age 20. The War had created need for teachers, and as she modestly said “they were literally taking on anyone, so that suited me” and she was appointed to a temporary teaching position immediately.

In 1943 Elizabeth entered the Primary Teacher’s Course at Melbourne Teacher’s College. In turn she gained an “extension” to complete a Bachelor of Commerce at the University of Melbourne. She also completed a Diploma of Education, qualifying her for high school teaching in 1951. Her completion of a commerce degree was highly unusual for a female at the time. She was the only female wearing cap and gown at the ceremony. This was the first, but not last time she broke through the glass ceiling.

Mary Hutton also introduced Betty to the Lyceum Club, a society dedicated to women graduates and other women who have distinguished themselves in art, music, literature, philanthropy or public service. She remained a member for the next 60 years, regarding her experience as most rewarding, and introducing others to membership and running the religious studies discussion group.

She completed her early high school teaching rounds in Gippsland, focussing on two subjects: commerce and geography. With each move she gained promotion and quickly moved through the ranks. The faith Miss Hutton had placed in her was justified, and in 1956, she was promoted to Head of Williamstown Girls Secondary School (at the time it went to Year 10). She caused quite a sensation on her first day, according to one of the staff there at the time, who recounted “we knew we were getting a new Head, but all the women Heads have been old, and you turned up, a young blond in a pink suit.”

In 1957, after 12 months at Williamstown, she was awarded a Fulbright Teaching Exchange to teach in Norwich in Upper New York State. Her first taste of American politics was learned in the classroom, when she came into the Year 8 class after lunch to find them all chewing gum. “Out, out, out” she cried, to which one upstart responded, “we live in a democracy you know”. “Not in my classroom” was Elizabeth’s retort. The scholarship was undoubtedly an eye opener and one that had positive influence on her future career.

On return from her travels, Betty resumed her role as Head at Williamstown for a further five years. However, the position at Williamstown was upgraded and she was too junior to be considered for promotion. As a woman, she was ineligible to be a permanent Principal of a co-educational High

School. She moved to the Acting Principal role at MacKinnon High School in 1970. Despite only undertaking that role for one year, she certainly introduced some significant and lasting changes – two of which included the introduction of a Year 12 study camp and permitting Year 12 students to wear casual dress to school on account of their imminently new and different life post high school / the students not wanting to buy new uniform / and the fact that she believed Year 12 students should be distinguished from other students. This was a radical decision and was in place for several decades. She departed McKinnon at the end on 1971, much loved and long remembered to this day.

In 1972 she was appointed Principal of Moorabbin High School, her first posting as Principal of a co-educational high school, shortly after employment conditions enabled such a promotion.

She was influential in the curriculum debates during the 1970s and oversaw significant changes to middle-school electives and methods of reporting. As a Principal, she endeavoured to open up the curriculum, where there was equality for both boys and girls at school, and encouraged bright girls to stay on at school and make something of themselves, as she had in her own youth.

In 1977, she transferred to being Principal of Buckley Park Secondary College for the next four years until her retirement in 1981. Here she is remembered for introducing a student exchange program, work experience for Year 11 students, and an experimental vertical middle school system where students would study core subjects supplemented by electives selected by students according to their interests. These innovations lasted for decades and provided options for students and flexibility in timetabling for teachers. As a Principal, she excelled as an innovative and technically astute leader.

Her Principal's message to Buckley Park High School, 1978 (which was also echoed in her time at McKinnon) best sums up her attitude to education leadership, and in many ways, herself:

“We must be willing to look continually at what we teach, to be ready to ruthlessly discard the useless, to be courageous enough to venture into the unknown, and yet with enough knowledge to discern and enough faith to stand fast, by the eternal values of truthfulness, loyalty and consideration for others.”

And so ended 40 years of dedicated, loyal and innovative service to the Victorian education system. Throughout these extraordinary years, Elizabeth was supremely blessed to have the enduring love and support of her husband Gordon Brown, in a family relationship that she greatly cherished.

She was aged 45 when she met Gordon, a widower in 1966. He was well known in the education department, in charge of Curriculum and Research and eventually Director of Planning.

Elizabeth had continued to live in the family's war service home and when they married Gordon joined her there at Caulfield until the mid-1970's, accompanied by Gordon's son Ross until he gained independence. On Gordon's retirement in 1977, the two moved to a farm in Hesket in the Macedon Ranges, a 30-acre property where the cattle shared the partly forested land with the wildlife.

At Hesket, while Elizabeth worked at Buckley Park, she and Gordon worshipped first at the Woodend Uniting Church and later at the Romsey Uniting Church. It was here they met Sandra and David Strack, a couple in their early-30s just starting out in married life and raising their young family. They became lifelong friends and adopted family. In 1981, after her four years at Buckley Park, Betty retired as well. Shortly thereafter, they moved from the farm to the small nearby town of Romsey.

Her faith gave her strength and solace when she went through what was probably the most difficult period of her life. Her role moved into carer as well as wife of Gordon when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's – a disease that seems all the more cruel when it attacks someone with as sharp an intellect as Gordon's.

After Gordon passed away in 1991, she continued to embrace life with renewed vigour. Four years later she completed a Bachelor of Divinity at the Melbourne College of Divinity, aged 75. Seven

years later, aged 82, she graduated from Charles Sturt University School of Theology with a Graduate Certificate of Aging and Pastoral Studies.

She was always been a regular churchgoer, and provided 50 years' service as a lay preacher in the Presbyterian and later Uniting Church. She completed her pastoral training with her placement at St Vincent's Hospital, and became a volunteer Chaplain at Epworth Hospital amongst others, a role she undertook until the age of 90. This mainly involved visiting patients in the wards, listening to them and talking to them.

She had no children of her own, yet would say without hesitation that the most important thing in her life was her family, namely her host of grandchildren and great grandchildren in the Strack family. There are many things we have all learned from Elizabeth as she made her life's journey. We remember her as intelligent, generous, and fiercely independent with a wonderful enthusiasm for life. With the clarity of thought and depth of understanding that we came to expect from her it was best summed up her own life – she said “life is to be lived, no matter what your age.”

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*Many of us at Mark the Evangelist are teachers, who take issue with the wider concerns of education. I noticed this in The Age recently, and asked the writer for permission to share it with you.*

### **Letter to the Editor**

by Neil Champion

The letter was printed in *The Age* on Saturday 15 May. It was in response to the report on the Project for International Student Achievement (PISA) showing that Australian students were going backwards against students in the region at an unacceptable rate. Much was made of the ATAR scores of teachers – a function more of entry to primary school teaching degrees than secondary teaching degrees, which usually require a basic degree before the professional degree.

So there has been a “decline and fall” in school standards (*The Age*, 12/5). It is not clear that the supposed intellectual weakness in secondary teachers is the cause. I work with many early career teachers with excellent degrees from high status universities. The problem may lie more in poorly planned and implemented programs, such as such as all students providing their own laptops or tablets. Too frequently, these are implemented without transparent, measureable goals and strong staff and community involvement at each stage.

In the last ten years, the most significant addition to schools is information communications technology (ICT). However, student performance has dropped the equivalent of 6 months against comparable students world-wide. Where are the before and after measures to show that they have actually enhanced learning outcomes? I love the learning opportunities that the devices open up. My concern is about the lack of transparency and data collected by those who are implementing change. What we might be seeing is a lack of quality thought, intellectual capacity, and ethical and organisational skill amongst the managers of many schools.

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*Coming back closer to home, it's wonderful to reflect on the history we share with the wider North Melbourne community. Here's a wonderful piece of history with a strong personal connection.*

### **Great-Grandma**

by Norah Killip

Some weeks ago I remarked to our editor that I had often wondered how my Great grandmother Catherine Howlett, née Schoolbred crossed Elm Street to reach the church in wet weather.

I knew she was the wife of the Superintendent of the Benevolent Asylum, situated on the south side of Elm Street, I knew she was Presbyterian and that her husband worshipped at the Baptist church at the end of Errol Street.

This started me considering how my Great grandmother got to church and what the church was like when she had managed to cross the short distance in wet weather.

Frederick Howlett was 24 when he reached Australia in 1856 to search for gold; He already had a brother established in South Australia. He may have set out for the goldfields; he was young, strong and a keen gardener, but he never reached the goldfields as he came to the settlement of Carisbrooke where a café and vine garden was established. He joined the gardening staff and sent home for a bundle of vine cuttings. In 1859 Frederick married Rachael King and they started a family.

Realizing that he needed a better income, he applied for a job at Melbourne University. It was to act as University Messenger, to mind the gate and to clean the fireplaces every day. The family came to work at the university in early 1859. Their accommodation, supplied by the University was a tent, probably with a wooden floor, and some timber to build a kitchen. The previous gatekeeper had burnt down the first kitchen when overcome by drink. Frederick was a stern teetotaler and that might have helped him secure the job.

In December Rachel died giving birth to their second child and a month later the child died also. Later in 1860 Frederick married Catherine Schoolbred who lived in Madeline Street, now Swanston Street, with her mother. They also lived in the tent until 1872 when Frederick was promoted to be Assistant to the Registrar and was able to buy land in the newly opening suburb of South Parkville. If you joined the Volunteers to repel the Russians the state gave you a 50-pound land voucher in those days. Using his voucher and his savings he was able to build 46 Morrah Street. It must have been wonderful after the privations of the tent. Feeling he was not fully appreciated at the University Frederick applied for the position of Superintendent of the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum in North Melbourne and was appointed.

This meant Catherine lost her new home and moved in with four boys and her husband to the reasonably new Superintendents House in the grounds of the Asylum and could attend a Presbyterian church, which was on the other side of the road from where she lived, in Elm Street.

In 1878 the Melbourne Benevolent Asylum was a haven for the disposed. It had been started in 1850 and was gradually increased in accommodation so that by 1878 there had been four extensions added to the original 1851 building. At the end of 1877 there were 819 inmates both male and female resident in the Asylum.

My great Grandparents came to live in the grounds in 1878. Setting out for church then was a little more complex than just stepping out the gate into Elm Street

The only way Catherine could easily leave was by the imposing front gates after the gatekeeper had unlocked one for her. She then would have been in Curzon Street, and turning left would be standing at the corner of Elm Street after a few yards. Imagine her dismay when she looked at the church, only 19 years old, to find it being demolished.

The Jubilee History, published in 1904 by the retired minister JT Robinson, records the buoyant feelings of the times, they had a manse and a graceful bluestone church which held 500 souls and was always full. Pew rents were 69 pounds and the manse debt reduced to 165 pounds. J T continues 'Perhaps it was forgotten that a church should always be a little too small for the congregation' they resolved to build. The liabilities, which the church took on in that year, were in pounds as follows:



Catherine on the occasion of her Golden Wedding Anniversary, 1910

Balance of Manse Debentures and Interest	£444.0.0.
Tender for new brick church	£5,819.0.0.
Tender for schoolroom [our present hall]	£585.19.0
Architects fees furniture and extras	£949.19.19
<b>In total</b>	<b>£7,798.18.9</b>

J T continues... the sum of 1598.0.0 pounds was contributed, one half of the church's land sold, and the other half mortgaged for 4,000.0.0 pounds. The church has reeled under this burden ever since.

So where did Catherine worship in 1878? The North Melbourne Town Hall, in Errol Street that also included the Mechanics Institute building had a suitable meeting room. Frederick found himself unable to physically support the burden of working for the Committee of the Benevolent Asylum. It meant giving up a good salary of over 300 pounds per annum and he set up as a land agent, just in time to be bankrupted by the crash in the 1880s. Eventually they moved to Gippsland and Frederick started a successful nursery for *Pinus insignis* now called *Pinus radiata*, selling it to most of the shires in Gippsland, and creating a serious ecological problem for the future. Catherine never had a new kitchen again, but their retirement home in Sandringham was a reasonable substitute

*As someone who lives in the former Lunatic Asylum in Kew, I am fascinated by how the meaning of "asylum" has changed, and even been corrupted in relation to our treatment of asylum-seekers. But I know that many at MtE are involved in pastoral work and care, and so I welcome this account from one of our number.*

### **Ministry at Epworth**

by Lauren Mosso

In my ministry at the Epworth Hospital in Richmond I have come to understand the importance of sacred spaces where people can simply sit and 'be'. Yet very little of this ministry happens in the chapel. We have Sunday services there, and it is always open (literally 24/7) as a welcoming and peaceful place. But many of the sacramental conversations that happen in this ministry are located at the patient's bedside, in the corridor with families and staff, and in our pastoral care office where we offer one another support and marvel at what God is doing among us (even if we don't all use that terminology to describe it).

The Sunday worship at MtE helps me in my discipleship and ministry, restoring me and challenging me to think differently about what God is doing with us, in us and for us. Gathering around the Lord's Table for weekly communion is important to me, as is hearing the Word proclaimed in Spirit and in truth. I appreciate the after-church conversation and the beauty of the flowers, prayers, hymns, and music.

I wonder what we need to 'keep' in order to 'hold fast to that which is good.' In the hospital setting it is clear that ministry happens wherever we are, and it is about people interacting in a place — not the place itself. In a hospital environment, with people of all faiths and none, I have come to appreciate that God works with all of us 'as we are' and comes to meet us where we are. The value of pastoral care is in listening deeply with gentle acceptance, presence, and appreciation of each person as we find them. It is nothing to do with the building and everything to do with listening to the 'still small voice' inside us that sends us out to love our neighbour as ourselves.



Photo courtesy *Crosslight*

*Bringing things even closer to home, Beth Stewart-Wright is the Programs Manager at UnitingCare Hotham Mission. Here she puts “mission” into a context that relates directly to us as a congregation.*

## **Mission at Work**

by Beth Stewart-Wright

As Melburnians we are proud of our incredibly diverse city; rich in culture, food, music, history and people. With an increasing degree of heterogeneity in and around the North Melbourne area, the inner North West is no exception to that. But there is a dark reality that exists beneath the surface of the tree-lined suburban streets, and one needn't scratch too hard in order to find it. Amidst the million-dollar terraced street-fronts and premium weekend organic farmer's markets, the gentrified fringes of the city mask an insidious race and class divide, most evident in local state schools.

An article recently published in *The Age* referred to this disturbing trend as “white flight,” a situation whereby inner city public schools are seeing an increasingly over-representation of disadvantaged students – many of whom are from migrant and refugee backgrounds – concentrated in inner city suburbs, while schools in adjacent neighbourhoods are favouring admissions to white, middle-class students over their migrant counterparts. As the article aptly summates, “In the Greens-voting socially liberal enclaves of the inner north, white middle class families have deserted the schools closest to the remaining commission housing towers, while competing for spots in a handful of schools seen to have greater prestige.” What is left are schools comprised of anywhere between 60-80% of students who are some of the poorest in the state, despite residing in suburbs where median house prices exceed the million-dollar mark. These so-called “sink schools” have effectively become schools exclusively for low-income and migrant families residing in the nearby public housing towers.



The issue goes beyond a matter of race and class divide undermining the school catchment zones, leading to an education system which privileges students based on income and skin colour. Firstly, it's an ethical concern in a city which, on the one hand waxes lyrical about the value of its multicultural identity, while on the other reserves opportunities for those who are in the position to pay for them. Secondly, it's a systemic issue which is often being ignored by senior policymakers and has the potential to become a determinant of generational disadvantage. Thirdly, it's a welfare issue as it is becoming more incumbent on school welfare teams to recognise and address issues of severe disadvantage – a process which is increasingly difficult for schools which are swelling with larger cohorts of disadvantaged students. And fourthly, it's a practicality issue for staff – who are often already stretched to capacity of both time and resources – whereby simply knowing where to start in looking for help can be an unsurmountable task. There is often a heavy reliance on an insider-level knowledge of local service providers and programs which provide stopgap welfare assistance to students.

Responsibility often falls on small-scale local charities and not-for-profits, such as UnitingCare Hotham Mission, who work behind the scenes to bridge the gap by working closely with local school welfare teams. This becomes particularly important in cases where students are unable to access services due to increased stringency in eligibility, age, visa and citizenship status, public housing eligibility and family circumstances.

Despite these challenges, there are examples of how effective partnerships between community service



agencies and schools' welfare teams can work together to meet the need of those students who are most vulnerable. Mount Alexander College in Ascot Vale, was named in the article as one of these "sink schools," hosts a 300-strong student population which consists primarily of youth from migrant backgrounds who reside in the high-density public housing flats in Flemington, Kensington and North Melbourne. Since 2014, Mount Alexander College and UnitingCare Hotham Mission have worked closely to enable equal access to resources, provide support to meet basic nutritional needs, and empower kids to break the poverty cycle by completing their education to the best of their ability. Hotham Mission's 'Renshaw Education Scheme', provides access to educational materials and resources for young people in secondary schools, or training programs. Of the 40 referrals received in January 2015, 95% came from Mount Alexander College. Students were provided with e-book packages, subsidised e-book readers, educational materials and resources. This program continues to grow in scope, reaching a wide number of students and families who otherwise would struggle to meet the costs associated with completing secondary school education. The longer term objective of the program is to reach as many students in the inner north west as possible, and enable them to complete their education by providing scholarships, and relieving the financial burden associated with attending and participating in school.



Similarly, Hotham Mission's 'Food for Thought' program, which provides subsidised lunch vouchers for students facing food insecurity and weekly fresh food parcels for students and their families, is also almost exclusively accessed by MAC students – the majority of whom reside in public housing. The program was spawned after the initial inception of Renshaw Education Support Packages revealed that adequate access to adequate food was so significant an issue facing youth that many students were attending school without food, and some were not attending due to lack of food. The food vouchers enable the most at-risk students to access a healthy lunch issued by the school welfare team and paid for by Hotham Mission. The fresh food parcels are distributed to students and families who are facing greater longer-term disadvantage and food insecurity. The program is expanding in 2016 to reach an even wider number of young people and their families in North Melbourne and Kensington, opening pathways for partnership with VincentCare, local services providers such as Cohealth, the YMCA and more schools.

The vast majority of Hotham Mission's programs are targeted at youth and their families in the North Melbourne areas, and it is perhaps unsurprising that 90% of the 600 or so people Hotham Mission provided support to in 2015-2016, were from migrant backgrounds. It is striking and often shocking to people when they realise that hunger and poverty is a pervasive reality in a modern metropolis such as Melbourne, though it is something that Hotham Mission seeks to mitigate in every program. What is vital to the efficacy of the Mission's programs and initiatives however, is the willingness of local schools and service providers to work in close partnership to articulate and adequately meet local community need. The provision of programs such as the Renshaw Education Support Scheme, and Food for Thought are integral in building the capacity of the younger generations to complete their education free of the burdens and stress of food and financial insecurity. In the words of Diogenes, "The foundation of every state is the education of its youth."



Beth Stewart-Wright is the Programs Manager at UnitingCare Hotham Mission.  
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### **Recommended**

One – John Langmore

Finally, widening our perspective to the whole country (and in case you need more to read!) John Langmore has kindly passed on The Uniting Church's Federal Election resource for 2016, *A Flourishing Society: Your Faith, Your Voice, Your Vote*, now available online.

It has been prepared by members of the Uniting Church UnitingJustice national reference group (of which John is a member).

[www.unitingjustice.org.au/election2016](http://www.unitingjustice.org.au/election2016)

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Two – Ann & Alan Wilkinson

Ann and Alan are in Perth. This morning they managed a break from grandparent duties and saw *Chasing Asylum*. All they can say is that it is a MUST for all those concerned about Asylum Seekers. Especially important as we head to the elections.

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### **The Editor (again!)**

*The editor thanks all those who have contributed to this issue of Mark the Word with such care and thought, and in such detail. Special thanks to Rod whose post-Synod relaxing time had to be put on hold to produce a much bigger issue of MtW than we'd expected.*

*I, for one, feel that you have all changed my thinking so that I can see the possibilities for us as a Congregation and a time when ...*

*“Our stern alarums changed to merry meetings,  
Our dreadful marches to delightful measures.”*

*Please vote with care and prayerfulness, whatever the arena!*  
Suzanne

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### **Noticeboard**

**19 June** MtE Futures Meeting Congregational Meeting

**21 August** MtE Futures Meeting Congregational Meeting

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