



Kairos



News in and around

Camberwell Uniting Church

Volume 8 Number 1

April 2015

From the Minister's Desk



Friends in God's family,

Warmest Greetings

In some ways things are just the same. The year moves on – past the heat that wasn't so hot! Each week has some rhythm of routine, worship continues and much of life is constant. At the same time things keep changing and there is much of it that can be quite disturbing.

With Easter upon us, I've been thinking about the odd intersection between faith and the life we experience around us. There's a junction of high hopes, disaster, healing and rebuilding that is at the centre of our faith story. Over the past month we have seen the terrible trio of Pam, Lam and Marcia, cyclones leaving a trail of destruction.

Cyclone Lam struck Arnhem Land on 20 February causing extensive damage, over 60 homes left uninhabitable. Communities on Elcho Island, Gapuwiyak, Ramingining and Milingimbi were affected. Cyclone Marcia struck Yeppoon and surrounding villages, then continued on a track to the south through Rockhampton. Apart from wind damage and widespread power loss over a number of days, flash flooding struck many areas. The flooding ruined crops, including cotton crops just six weeks short of harvest, and levelled kilometres of fencing. This has been devastating to farmers in these areas, who have endured their second round of floods in two years, and now face the cost of rebuilding and re-fencing yet again without income to cover these costs.

Recovery from these events will take years and

people I visit ask me to tell people not to forget them. They need support which is ongoing, not just reacting to the next disaster headline.

Rev. Dr. Stephen Robinson is the National Disaster Recovery Officer of the Uniting Church. Visiting Vanuatu, he writes of his experience. "Through the darkness I could smell smoke. For me it triggered memories of bushfire, but it wasn't the clean odour of eucalyptus; rather it was that of a burning house or smouldering rubbish tip. I was struck by the choking thickness of the smoke, wet heat, and the darkness. Generators powered essential areas but the airport was largely blacked out. On the road were dim, twisted reminders of the violence of Pam: torn signs, power wires hanging or laying across the streets, sheets of iron draped around poles." Disasters happen, the needs are great, rebuilding is sorely needed, things are just the same. But not for the people who live through trauma. For them it changes life, nothing will ever be the same.



Steven Robinson & Vanuatu church leaders

In Jesus festival entry to Jerusalem with its high hopes and then his trial and execution followed by Easter, we have this same pattern. There is an intersection with our life experience. The worst of life has been experienced by God and God stands alongside those who suffer. Nothing will ever be the same, but in this there is also the hope of renewal, of a new beginning breaking forth surprisingly out of sad endings.

Of course, we can be part of bringing those hopes of new beginnings in practical ways for victims of these disasters though responding to appeals. But also by doing what we can with those around us, because this is a junction we inhabit!

The peace and the love of God be with you and yours,
Ian

From the Editor....

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Hello and welcome to the first edition of Kairos for 2015.

How quickly the festive season seems to have come and gone: hot cross buns and Easter eggs have been on supermarket shelves and in bread shops for over 2 months already.

Summer is my best time to catch up on reading, and this year it has sometimes been hard to reconcile our weather while I have been reading Peter Fitzsimon's excellent story on Douglas Mawson (including the travails of Shackleton and Scott), as they trudge through - 59° temperatures in blizzards eating nothing for days on end. Very brave and committed individuals, exploring the world's last and climatically most challenging frontier.

After that small window of time around Christmas and New Year, when the usual commitments for most of us cease temporarily (ministers excepted), I also turn my attention to the TV, watching with interest to see what the stations promote as the great new things for the year, as well as waiting for the return of old favourites.

The ABC has spoiled me this year with the return of the excellent *Doctor Blake Mysteries* on Friday night, followed on Saturday night with the new (and less publicised) *Grantchester* series. Set in the English countryside, *Grantchester* follows two unlikely allies (a local vicar and a village policeman) as they solve a series of cases (mostly murder/mystery) that reveal the dark side of early 1950s England. Two great reasons to stay in, or record and

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watch later (the person who invented the process to record TV programs, I rate just behind the genius who invented the remote – I think it's a boy thing).

As the credits rolled out of one the recent episodes of *Grantchester*, something caught the corner of my eye. Rewinding, I saw that one the 'location managers' for the series is 'Jethro Ensor.'

Ensor is not a surname one sees that often, and certainly 'Jethro' is not among the commonest of first names. Can't claim him as a relative, but he might be, even if by a few more than six degrees of separation.

I get a buzz when a person's name (or a significant place) catches my attention, so imagine my delight when I was given a copy of an article that appeared in the Herald Sun (December 14, 2014) about the young Australian doctors and nurses working on the frontline of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone. One of the doctors featured was Dr Melissa McRae, daughter of Gael and Ian, and the article put a human face on life at the heart of this deadly outbreak.

Excerpts from the article and the wider impact of the doctors' work are featured later in this issue. It encourages me to think that there is still a place for goodness and brave commitment in this world, even in its most dangerous corners, thanks to people like Melissa who put their lives at risk to selflessly help others. I feel so much better knowing that, and take vicarious pride in knowing that someone connected to our congregation is more than just a name, but a part of a modern miracle.

I hope you find some articles and items of interest and merit within this issue of Kairos, and that you have an Easter of peace, reflection and spiritual re-invigoration.

Stuart

Gwenda Shadforth

The Camberwell Church Family was saddened this week to hear of the sudden passing of Gwenda. We extend our sincere condolences to Ian and all his family as they mourn the loss of a loving wife and mother, you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Messy Church Reports – February and March 2015

February - “Superheroes” - (The Parable of the Talents)

“Jesus is our Superhero” - a great song to start our 4th year of Messy Church! Our time at Messy Church started with cape making-so everyone could have capes featuring their favourite superhero! There was Batman, Spiderman, Superman, Wonder Woman etc. Then it was off to do the obstacle course outside and if you made it through, a Chuppa Chup was the reward. Next into the hall to make your Chuppa Chup a superhero or decorate a cupcake as a Ninja Turtle or paste the costume onto a Super Boy or a Super Girl.

Then off into church for the celebration and singing. We did a play about a king and his servants whom he trusted with his talents while he went away. One servant saved the talents for the king and didn't use them. One used only one talent, but the other servant used all he had been given to serve God, for the good of people.

Dinner was organized by Ruth and friends, and Stuart cooked sausages with bread and salad followed by cupcakes, fresh fruit and pancakes. We also had a visitor from Perth and a new family who go to Camberwell Primary who saw the sign and came along.

March- Messy Easter

With 'Messy Easter' name labels in purple and white (instead of our usual white and red) we were all ready to embrace the Easter story, in fact 51 of us!

Gathering activity was making a donkey mask - the donkey was a very important part of Palm Sunday which is where we started our Easter journey.

Making a Garden of Gethsemane with tubs of dirt was the next activity, including making Roman soldiers, eggs covered with papier mache with a surprise inside, palm trees, and finger painting, in the centre of which dried tape was lifted to leave a cross.

Thanks to Margery, Maree, Judy, Maxene, Max, Carolyn, Lois for the activities and to Elaine for her photos. The photos displayed in the church of the activities every Messy Church are so enjoyed by all who come.

Celebration - the story was “Dave the Donkey” read by Fiona with the help of Cecil the puppet to highlight most of the Easter Story. We sang “We have a King who rides a Donkey” and “Glory Hallelujah”. Ian led prayers and finished with a reflection about the Easter Story and how God loves us all.

The meal was hamburgers in buns and salad, then fruit sticks and honey joys. What better way to finish a Messy Easter celebration. Thanks to Ruth and Sam in the kitchen and Stuart on the BBQ.

Ebola

According to Wikipedia, Ebola virus disease (also Ebola haemorrhagic fever), or simply **Ebola**, “is a disease of humans and other primates caused by ebolaviruses. Signs and symptoms typically start between two days and three weeks after contracting the virus with a fever, sore throat, muscle pain, and headaches. Then, vomiting, diarrhoea and rash usually follow, along with decreased function of the liver and kidneys. At this time some people begin to bleed both internally and externally”.

Ebola is one of the deadliest viruses known to medical science, with no specific cure and mortality rates of up to 90 percent. The Ebola epidemic now raging in West Africa is the worst one in history. The virus spreads by direct contact with body fluids, such as blood, of an infected human or other animal. This may also occur through contact with an item recently contaminated with bodily fluids.

Control of outbreaks requires coordinated medical services, alongside a certain level of community engagement. The medical services include rapid detection of cases of disease, contact tracing of those who have come into contact with infected individuals, quick access to laboratory services, proper healthcare for those who are infected, and proper disposal of the dead through cremation or burial.

No specific treatment or vaccine for the virus is available, although a number of potential treatments are being studied.

The medical response and the human context

On December 14 2014, the Herald Sun ran an article entitled “*Hope Lives Here – a story to warm your heart: Australian doctors and nurses on the Ebola frontline*”.*

The article featured interviews with a doctor and a nurse working in the heart of Sierra Leone's Ebola outbreak. The doctor interviewed was Dr Melissa McRae, youngest daughter of longstanding and much loved members of our congregation, Gael and Ian, who grew up in our congregation. The interview was done 10 days into a one month stint in the Red Cross treatment centre.

Unfortunately, Copyright restrictions prevent us from printing the entire article or sharing any of the pictures, however, the observations of Dr McRae are highly instructive and moving:

Even after 10 days, it was hard for Melissa not to cry. *"Crying is a sure way to fog up your goggles.....and a loss of vision is a huge issue as it makes me unsafe and means I have to leave the patient area"*, she says, *"I feel sad they have died alone in a tent, that their family did not get to say goodbye"*.

However, Melissa remains full of hope and pride in the work the local and international team is achieving. *"In Kenema market, the kids still give us a warm welcome but hold up their hands and say 'no thanks' to communicate that they have learnt to not touch others"*.

The area Melissa worked in had no drug treatment available and no cure at the time, and although working conditions are very basic there is no shortage of skilled staff and supplies.

Melissa's main roles are to work out which patients are actually infected with Ebola and ensuring they are placed in a 'confirmed' patient ward, as opposed to a 'suspected' patient ward. Our *"patients range from a month old girl to a 70 year old grandmother, and from those who are well enough to walk, to those who are too weak to lift their own head,"* Dr McRae said.

"The one-month-old baby's mother died from Ebola one week ago and remains in the treatment centre with her father and her sister who is seven. The baby is weak but has been improving over the last few days, her feeding has improved and she's getting stronger".

"Amid the grief, a 25 year old male patient is lifting Dr McRae's spirits more than anyone. Unable to talk, respond or even drink on his own when she first arrived, the man was carried out of his tent to see others recovering and give him hope. *"Yesterday morning, after four days of weakness he walked out of his tent and sat on a chair to eat his breakfast. Staff ran to the fence to watch, and other patients joined in the cheers and sang for him."*

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"It makes me smile thinking about him. With so many patients dying we need to focus on these patients."

Wider implications of the international medical effort

The Ebola crisis has the potential to reverse more than a decade of peace building, development and progress in the region. Immediate and continued action to address the health threat works to prevent:

- Food scarcity and rising prices, as farmers and traders are able to work together with physical contact without risk;
- Civil unrest, caused by food scarcity and leading to distrust in government and raised societal tensions;
- Suspension of health and education services, critical to stabilizing society, reducing crime and social conflict.

Continued support enables not only education in prevention of infection and spread of disease, but also assists recovering patients, continued food production and facilitates rebuilding for the future.

Hearing about the work of one committed individual humanises this crisis for me. I cannot speak highly enough of the people putting their own lives on the line to save so many other people, in fact whole countries. I hope I get the chance to thank Dr McRae in person one day, it will be an honour and a privilege.

** (A full copy of the article can be obtained on request from the Church Office).*



Julie Andrews Turning 79!

To commemorate her birthday, actress/vocalist, Julie Andrews made a special appearance at Manhattan's Radio City Music Hall for the benefit of the AARP.

One of the musical numbers she performed was 'My Favorite Things' from the legendary movie 'Sound Of Music'. Here are the lyrics she used (you should sing them out loud):

Botox and nose drops and needles for knitting,
Walkers and handrails and new dental fittings,
Bundles of magazines tied up in string,
These are a few of my favorite things.

*Cadillacs and cataracts, hearing aids and glasses,
Polident and Fixodent and false teeth in glasses,
Pacemakers, golf carts and porches with swings,
These are a few of my favorite things.*

When the pipes leak, when the bones creak,
When the knees go bad,
I simply remember my favorite things,
And then I don't feel so bad.

*Hot tea and crumpets and corn pads for bunions,
No spicy hot food or food cooked with onions,
Bathrobes and heating pads and hot meals they bring,
These are a few of my favorite things.*

Back pain, confused brains and no need for sinnin',
Thin bones and fractures and hair that is thinnin',
And we won't mention our short shrunken frames,
When we remember our favorite things.

When the joints ache, When the hips break,
When the eyes grow dim,
Then I remember the great life I've had,
And then I don't feel so bad.

(Ms. Andrews received a standing ovation from the crowd that lasted over four minutes and repeated encores)

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This could be us.....

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn't need my help to leave the hospital. After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator. On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him. 'I don't know,' he said. 'She's still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown.'

An elderly couple had dinner at another couple's house, and after eating, the wives left

the table and went into the kitchen.

The two gentlemen were talking, and one said, 'Last night we went out to a new restaurant and it was really great I would recommend it very highly.'

The other man said, 'What is the name of the restaurant?'

The first man thought and thought and finally said, 'What's the name of that flower you give to someone you love? You know the one that's red and has thorns.'

'Do you mean a rose?'

'Yes, that's the one,' replied the man. He then turned towards the kitchen and yelled, 'Rose, what's the name of that restaurant we went to last night?'



Why go to church?

If you're spiritually alive, you're going to love this!

If you're spiritually dead, you won't want to read it.

If you're spiritually curious, there is still hope!

A Church-goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. 'I've gone for 30 years now,' he wrote, 'and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the ministers are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all.'

This started a real controversy in the 'Letters to the Editor' column. Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

'I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals.

But I do know this... They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work.

If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!

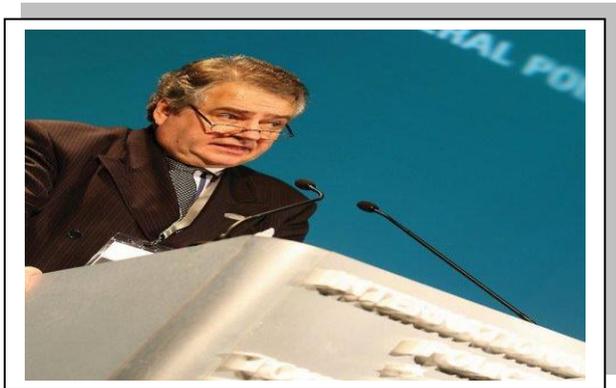
Faith sees the invisible, believes the incredible and receives the impossible!
Thank God for our physical AND our spiritual nourishment!

Lois Grenfell

The church of the future: Oh the possibilities

You've heard it before, we all know it's happening: the Uniting Church is in steady decline. Despite the good intentions of many who try to encourage us to change our ways so we can thrive again, the truth is the church is currently heading towards a gloomy situation.

Dr Keith Suter, futurist, well respected Australian social commentator and Uniting Church member, has independently researched and completed his third PhD: *The Future of the Uniting Church in Australia*, as a labour of love through the University of Sydney. Using the 'scenario planning' method, previously featured in relation to work of the Uniting Church in Western Australia's Strategy and Mission Planning Commission, Keith has come up with four 'possible' futures the Uniting Church in Australia could head down.



To clarify, a possible future is different to a predicted or preferred future, in that it may not be a scenario which we all want and it's not the only option available to us. Instead, Keith has put forward a number of realistic scenarios that could or could not play out depending on how we manage the organisation from here on.

Many people in Australia today see the Uniting Church as a bunch of dwindling congregations with not much sway in the larger scheme of things. Keith, however, said that this simply isn't true. The Uniting Church is one of the most

asset rich organisations in the country and its future needs to be taken seriously.

"If all the assets in the Uniting Church were combined as one company," Keith said, "that one company would be larger than 90% of companies on the Australian Stock Exchange."

"The Uniting Church is an immense financial institution." Unfortunately, he also recognises that many of its members are aging, tired and just want the Uniting Church to be there for them in the end stages of their life.

"A lot of congregations are old people who just want to be reassured that the Uniting Church will be there to bury them," he said. "They're not worried what will happen after they're dead."

With these two competing points in mind, a considered future is necessary. So what are these possible futures?

1. Word and deed

In this first scenario, the Uniting Church would be consolidated into a small amount of large regional centres which operate seven days a week providing spiritual care, welfare and worship catered to a range of different lifestyles. This church would know the importance of Christian education and training, ensuring staff – who know and endorse the Uniting Church's ethos – regularly take part in refresher courses. This church would also be heavily involved in social justice and advocacy and teaches its staff how to be comfortable in sharing their faith.

Keith said that, in this church, "each parish has a team ministry, with an ordained senior minister/chief executive officer (CEO) holding together the central vision of word and deed."

"A 'word and deed' Uniting Church is an Australian church that holds together the Christian gospel and the delivery of welfare services. This Uniting Church has a mission perspective – it operates for the chief purpose of people who are not in it."

2. Secular welfare

In this scenario, the Uniting Church would no longer have congregations and would focus all of its energy on providing a national network of welfare and community services – possibly through the already established UnitingCare.

While there may be little interest in Christian spirituality in this church, there may be interest in other forms of spirituality and there would be a high level of awareness in secular humanitarian work.

As this church would have no ties to congregations, Keith said that it would be freer to operate within a secular society.

“It will not be weighed down with concerns about congregational matters,” he said. “It will be able to tender for government contracts without the risk of theological complications.”

A secular welfare Uniting Church “recognises that it is now operating in a secular society where people are more interested in the quality of the services rather than the motivation behind their delivery.”

3. Early Church

In contrast to the previous scenario, this scenario would see the Uniting Church move away from government funding altogether, away from its welfare services and away from its institutional structure. This church would have fewer assets and resources, possibly becoming a network of ‘house’ churches or other creative initiatives, with a similar mission to that of the early church of before the fourth century.

Keith said that the Uniting Church is currently in a situation similar to that of the early centuries of the Christian era, of competing faiths and an extensive mission field.

“Jesus spoke of the ‘Kingdom of God’ but instead all we have is a ‘church’,” he said.

This church would need a whole new leadership for a ‘back-to-basics’ style church in a new world.

“The Uniting Church in this scenario is focussed on the kingdom of God and what the phrase means in today’s society. It is fluid, flexible open and not fixed on a denomination **or creeds or liturgy.**”

4. Recessional

In this final possible scenario, the Uniting Church would be wound up altogether, creating a valuable exit strategy. Without an exit strategy, the church will simply fade away, but with one its work can carry on in new forms. Assets and resources can be used for good under a different umbrella, as decided by the Uniting Church.

“In this scenario the welfare services are still funded by government, but government sees no special reason why the Uniting Church itself should be trusted to run them because the Uniting Church is fading away. The second driver is low Christian spirituality. In this scenario, the end of the dominant Constantinian paradigm means Australians decide that – in an

increasingly ‘consumerist’ society – the Uniting Church has nothing much to offer them.”

So what next?

The challenge to us now, is what will the church do with this research? To do nothing could be devastating.

“At the moment when I look at the Uniting Church I see it gradually fading away without an exit strategy,” he said. “An exit strategy is when you say, ‘yes we are dying, what can we now do?’” Keith said.

David Kriel, strategy and mission planner for the Uniting Church in WA, believes that Keith’s work is invaluable for the church. “He’s provided the church with a tool. Local, synods, presbyteries – all bodies can use it,” David said. “It’s coming from a person who’s the top of his trade. He’s really grounded in the church and he’s got a heart for the Uniting Church.”

“How we’re going to use it is up to us. There’s no right or wrong, good or bad way. Let’s just use it and talk about it,” David said.

In the final chapter of his dissertation, Keith writes about the importance of having this conversation in the Uniting Church and sets out some talking points for any community within it. He also reminds us that the decline in membership of Uniting Church in Australia is not a symptom of a decline in Christianity around the world. In fact, global Christianity is actually on the rise. He even offers an option of an exit plan to gift some of our resources to this growing overseas movement.

Having been a member of the Uniting Church since its union in 1977, Keith himself found researching this topic a difficult task.

“I was involved [in the Uniting Church] right at the very beginning,” he said. “If someone had said to me 40 years later that I’d be writing in these terms I would say, ‘no, that’s not possible’. I’m very much like many Uniting Church ministers who, when they joined, thought they joined a flourishing organisation.”

Despite the difficult topic, Keith said he was surprised not to have received any negative feedback from members who hold this organisation so close to their hearts. “Deep down in their bones everyone realises there’s something wrong,” he said.

Inspired?

Dr Keith Suter has made his PhD, *The Future of the Uniting Church in Australia*, and a summary of it, available free of charge to anyone interested in reading it. To get a copy, contact

him through his website at www.churchfutures.com.au or at <http://global-directions.com>.

With appreciation to Helen Martin for putting this challenging article before us.

Great Philosophers of our time...

Desmond Tutu...When the white missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land! They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.

WH Auden...We are here on earth to do good unto others. What the others are here for, I have no idea.

David Letterman...America is the only country where a significant proportion of the population believes that professional wrestling is real but the moon landing was faked.

John Glenn...As I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind - every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder.

Prince Philip...When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.

Arnold Schwarzenegger...Having more money doesn't make you happier. I have 50 million dollars but I'm just as happy as when I had 48 million.

Robert Benchley... I have kleptomania, but when it gets bad, I take something for it.

The world economy explained with two cows

A Uniting Church Parish has two cows bought from a cake stall, lamington drive and plant sale funds. It forms a committee to decide what to do with them. A congregational meeting is called to delegate responsibility for maintaining the cows while a decision is made as to the best welfare outcome.

The Property committee prepares a roster for caring for the cows.

The rostered person goes on holidays and forgets to do a swap.

The cows develop mastitis from not being milked satisfactorily and their condition deteriorates. A vet is called and paid for from another cake stall, lamington drive and plant sale.

The cow committee (UCACC) decides to give the cows to a rural parish who can look after them until a permanent decision is made.

A cake stall, lamington drive and plant sale are organized to cover cow transport costs.

A social weekend is later held with the rural parish, who host a BBQ using freshly killed local produce.

From Helen Martin

.... and finally

The Washington Post publishes winning submissions to its yearly contest, in which readers are asked to supply alternate meanings for common words. Some winners were:

1. **Coffee** - The person upon whom one coughs.
2. **Flabbergasted** - Appalled by discovering how much weight one has gained.
3. **Abdicate** - To give up all hope of ever Having a flat stomach.
4. **Esplanade** - To attempt an explanation while drunk.
5. **Lymph** - To walk with a lisp.
6. **Balderdash** - A rapidly receding hairline.



Thanks to Alan Lawton for the church signs

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Kairos is the Greek word meaning "time", that is, those times which are turning points demanding decision while the opportunity remains. Although it refers primarily to the coming of Christ it may also refer to the present time in the life of our congregation.
Editor: Stuart Ensor