

St Mary's



AVE

SEASON OF CREATION 2021



Hildegard (1230 AD), Cosmos: Body & Soul

You in your small corner, and I in mine

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We meet on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri people of the great Kulin nation.
We acknowledge their leaders past present and emerging and offer them our respects.



Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of the parish of St Marys, the Anglican Church, or its members.

INTRODUCTION

Rhondda Fahey

The Season of Creation 2021 began on September 1 and ends on St Francis' Day'. St Mary's has celebrated the season with special weekly sermons, dedicated service sheets for Morning Prayer, meetings and zoomed morning tea presentations by the Climate Change Action Group and special posts on the church Facebook pages.

This Season of Creation edition of Ave contains various parish responses to the challenges set by World Council of Churches, and more recently by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholemew, Pope Francis, and Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury, to the creation, re-creation and preservation of our small planet, and to Climate Change.

Appropriately we begin by remembering Jackie Webber, a much-loved member of our parish, who died this month, and whose funeral took place at St Mary's on the 17th of September.

Jackie was for many years a warden of the parish, part of the parish council which conserved the heritage Moreton Bay Fig tree on the corner of Queensberry and Howard Streets. She was a member of the North Melbourne Progress Association, which halted the destruction of many streets of North Melbourne houses, a generous preserver of fruit and vegetables in their season, a lover of animals, and a tireless gardener. We extend our condolences to her two sons, Will and Tim, and honour her memory by printing Fr Jim's homily and Tim's eulogy. They truly capture the spirit we all loved.



REMEMBERING JACKIE WEBBER

Eulogy

Tim Webber

The morning after mum died, I received a note from one of my Canadian cousins, Dean. In it, Dean said, “She took good care of me when I visited you guys! And kicked me out when I needed kicking out...”

Being from the Canadian side of my family, Dean had only spent time very limited time with my mother, but in that sentence Dean captured some of the core essence of mum. Caring, generous, committed to family and friends, but also frank, honest, willing to provide some “tough love”. She was an extremely caring soul, always ready to help those in need. She was generous with her time and resources when people needed. Along with this, she also had the trait of calling it like it was; like no one I have known, she knew how to call a spade, a spade.

Our family had our family pizza restaurant in Lygon Street that we frequented throughout my childhood, and the owner knew us quite well. As Wew and I got older we stopped going as regularly, but after a few years absence we went back for dinner one evening. Upon walking in we got instant recognition from the owner, welcoming us in. Mum looked back at him with a quizzical look on her face and asked, “What have you done to your hair?”. He looked back blankly at her - it was quite obvious that he was wearing a toupee. Actually, perhaps more accurately, Mum did know how to call a spade a shovel.

One of places you’d often find Mum was squat on our front doorstep, nominally to read the newspaper and watch the world go by, but really to be able to roll a cigarette and have a smoke. On one of these occasions, someone was walking by and noticed an old black and white TV we’d put out to dispose of. In stilted English, he asked if the TV worked and if it was ok if he took it. Mum struck up a conversation and learnt that he’d come over from China to study, separated from his wife and daughter who were back in China. He was boarding down the road and my mum enquired as to how much it was costing. When told she immediately snapped, “that’s outrageous, I’ve got a spare room here, you can stay here for free”, and so Lou came and lived with us, subsequently tutoring Wew and

becoming a family friend. Within their conversation Mum had recognised someone who was working hard to build his life for himself and his family, and saw she could help them out, and did so, selflessly. That's the sort of person Mum was.

Mum was born in Hamilton in 1940, the daughter of Percy and Laura, and sister to James and Helen. Throughout her life Mum's family – Pa and Ga, Helen, and Jim and Liz – were a constant part of her life. The family moved “Pine Lodge” in Croydon when mum was very young. Schooled at Tintern Grammar she went on to The University of Melbourne, studying a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in History. It was at the University Women's college that mum met Dorothy, who became one of mum's true lifelong friends. In speaking to Dorothy earlier this week, I asked her about her thoughts of Mum, and her immediate comment was, “How lucky was I to have made friends with your mum at such a stage in our lives. I don't know anyone with such Integrity, Intelligence and innate decency, and I was honoured to be her friend for over 60 years.” I think she's right, that's the sort of person Mum was.

Together in 1962 they took part in an overseas homestay program called “Experiment in International Living” with which they travelled to India.

India was a life-changing experience for mum, it was there, walking along the waterfront in Mumbai that she met Don, her future husband. She also built a life-long friendship with the families she met there, particularly the Patucks – Auntie and Navaz. Mum had an incredible fondness for India and the friends she made there. Don and she lived there for close to a year at one stage while Don was studying anthropology, living in a traditional Indian village, living a traditional village life. Whether she was this way before, I don't know, but I believe that her time and association with India gave her a perspective and grounding that stripped her of all pretence, like nobody I've met she cared not for things of fashion or glamour. She took people as they were and did not judge them for what they wore, or how they looked, and this included herself.

A year or so ago Wew posted a photo on Facebook of mum in the nursing home, to which I commented “Good to see she's still wearing that rugby jumper of mine that I went to throw out in 1989.” She was making sure she got full value out of that rugby jumper purchased from a bargain stall at the Queen Victoria market. That's the sort of person mum was.

After Mum and Don returned to Australia and got married in 1963, and two years later they bought the house at 29 Canning Street in 1965. Mum called Canning

Street home for over 50 years. This is one aspect of Mum that I now deeply appreciate, the stability she brought to those around her – family and friends alike. If you knew Mum, you knew Canning St, and you knew she'd be there; she was always there, whenever you needed her. Solid and stable as a rock.

Mum loved animals and treated them like royalty. When buying food, she'd buy the freshest raw meat for them, and if it needed preparing for them she'd dedicate her time, and those living with her to it – both Wew and I are expert at chopping up chicken necks to the perfect consistency for cat consumption. She'd religiously take the dogs for a walk – whichever dogs they were at the time – and it wouldn't just be a walk in the very convenient small park across the road from her house, it'd be bundling them in the car and driving them to Royal Park or Yarra Bend so they'd have acres to run around in and letting them run until they were exhausted. She got such joy from her animals, and they from her.

In 1993 Don passed away. They'd been together for over 30 years, almost two-thirds of her life at that time, and this was a tough time for Mum, and a big adjustment to make. It was after this time that Mum became more involved at St Mary's church. She was an active part of the choir – she loved singing, and was a churchwarden and contributed greatly to the running of the church. One aspect that was a yearly ritual, was preparing things to sell at the church fete. Months beforehand, she'd head off to the Victoria market – one of her great loves – and buy a swathe of fresh product. She'd bring it home and get out her pots and pans and spend countless hours making various jams, chutneys, and quince jellies. Along with doing it herself, she'd recruit an army of other parishioners to do it as well. When matter-of-factly pointed out by Vivian that the prices charged didn't really represent the effort and cost put in to make them, mum's response was "Making money is not the reason for all these efforts, it's all about the relationships", and I believe that's why she enjoyed church so much.

Later on in life, Mum spent a lot of time with Wew's wife Vivian. English is not Vivian's native tongue, and when Vivian was finishing her Master's degree Mum gave her help by proof-reading her papers, and providing on-the-go tutoring in English. Vivian got to know mum really well, and I'd like to quote a comment she made to me, "People called her Jackie, but I called her Mrs Webber, my mother in law, who had a stern face and could seem grumpy, hard to get along with; but under these shields, she had the most kind, tender and caring heart that I know."

There were many different names for mum - Jeannane, Jackie, Mrs. Webber,

Nana J, mum, but I think we can all agree she was an exceptional woman, and I can't imagine a better mum to have. I'll miss you mum, rest in peace.



Funeral Homily
Jeananne (Jackie Webber) St Mary's North Melbourne
17 Sept 2021

Father Jim Brady

My memories of Jackie go back to a time before I became Parish Priest here at St Mary's Church in 1977. At that time we lived in Carlton, but our children attended Errol St School and I often dropped them off in the mornings, or picked them up at the end of the school day.

As an outsider to North Melbourne at in those days I knew only a few of the parents who clustered in the playground waiting for their kids to be dismissed. But I observed, as they chatted among themselves, some stood out. Among these there was a young mother who usually wore a full length, kaftan style dress, her mouth habitually extended in a face splitting smile, (when it was not pulling on a cigarette). Her voice was deep and strong, and carried well, so from snippets of her conversation with others I gathered that she was picking up a child called Woo. Woo Webber.

Jump forward now a few years and I am Vicar at St Mary's. I continue to see this same woman at the school and at local community events, and one day walking up Canning St I see her on the green doing some form of exercises which involve the brandishing of what looks like a mediaeval broadsword, the kind you hold in two hands and swish around cutting the air in front of you while performing deft movements with your feet. If her presence and personality had impressed itself on me in the school playground it did so even more now.

Jump forward a couple more years and young Uni student called William Edward Webber (initials W-E-W) (Woo) joins St Mary's Choir. And from that time to my delight, William's mother Jackie becomes a regular Sunday morning attender at St Mary's. A track suit has replaced the kaftan, but the broad smile and the cigarette are still there. And so is the strong, confident personality.

Jackie made it clear to me straight away that she was more of a fellow traveler than a committed believer. I think she once used the term ‘atheist’ but there was no hostility in the term, as there is so often today. If at that time she thought the term appropriate I think it was meant to imply that she felt her beliefs had a spiritual dimension but one less sharply focused than a credal affirmation would require. Whether that changed in the quarter century during which she regularly attended St Mary’s I don’t know and neither does anyone else to whom I have spoken.

Religion for Jackie was a matter of doing the right thing rather than thinking the right thing, and certainly doing things of practical use rather than fussing over matters of words, procedure and protocol. what we call in the church – matters of liturgy.

Music was ok, especially traditional classics, and beautiful words, so long as they were left intact. I think she was of the school that said, “Leave it alone. Don’t try to mess with it or you’ll mess it up”. In this, as in other matters, her opinions were strongly held, and strongly expressed.

I think the choice of our first reading from the Book Ecclesiastes this morning was a masterstroke. In its rhythms of language and strongly expressed sentiments I can actually hear Jackie speaking. The content might in places differ but the style, (in my ear), unmistakably recalls Jackie’s directness.

A good name is better than precious ointment!

Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting!

Better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than to listen to the song of fools. (She hated gushing praise)

Do not be too righteous; do not act too wisely. Why should you destroy yourself?

It’s Jackie all over. Keeping one’s feet on the ground. Trying not to get above oneself. And giving no place to fools and their prating foolishness.

That was Jackie’s philosophy and it found practical expression in the way she lived. For her, just to sing in the choir was not enough. She always had to attend to the practical details that were necessary if the music was to contribute to the total effect of what was going on – whether Concert or Sunday worship. All choir members had to have their music distributed beforehand, and in the right order of its being required. It all had to be put away afterwards - everything in its proper

place so that it could be produced easily when required again. In my mind's eye I can see Jackie, her deep blue choir gown over her track suit, performing these tasks – the putting away bit after the service often being delayed until after a cigarette outside but always meticulously done.

Choir Director Beverley Phillips tells me that she found Jackie a tower of strength and a great support during those ten years or so when she was a chorister, going on to offer weekly overnight hospitality on Saturdays to Beverley and her dog after Beverley moved to Anakie.

In my time at St Mary's a lot of work had to be done on the buildings. That continued to be the case afterwards. Both in my time and subsequently, for as long as she could manage it, Jackie was a great worker in both the money raising and, where it was possible and required, in the work itself. On the afternoon of one Maundy Thursday work on the roof of the side aisle had dislodged large quantities of dust and soot all over the interior of the church. Jackie and a small team of helpers, working frantically, had it all cleaned up in time for the important evening service.

She had an eye for detail and a passion for doing things thoroughly, often preferring to work alone – polishing the memorial plaques around the walls of the church, or the candlesticks and candelabra. I remember on one occasion visiting her at home and she was applying some arboreal medicine to a tree. I'd have just given it a quick spray but she was carefully rubbing it thoroughly over each individual leaf.

Whether it was large scale projects or small routine tasks Jackie had an eye for detail. My wife told me she remembers noticing how Jackie meticulously picked up every single fig of the thousands that fell from the large Moreton Bay Phicus in the Church grounds. Choir Director Beverley also testified to her meticulous attention to detail saying "No envelope went to the bin without having served it's initial purpose of transmission, then as message note bank, and then possibly as fire lighter or otherwise, recycled. That applied to much else as well."

As well as the choir and grounds Jackie became increasingly involved in the annual parish Fair.

She ran the Jams and Pickles Stall, always one of the major attractions. She and Marion Poynter, would gather others to begin work each year in May, building up stocks for the Fair in October.

Marion and others have said to me “Don’t forget to mention the kasoundi!” This was Jackie’s specialty – a particularly rich and spicy form of chutney, a legacy of the times Jackie spent in India. Large quantities were made for each Fair. Orders for it were received beforehand, and it was invariably all sold on the day.

Actually, having been introduced to it by Jackie, and having obtained the recipe either from her or from Marion, we regularly make it for our own use. Jackie’s kasoundi - the best form of Chutney, I know, to accompany Indian curries or whatever you want to enhance.

Jackie had a great love of India and visited it regularly. Her visits were not just brief holiday excursions but included extended stays and work.

It is good to know that friends in India are joining us in this service via the Internet and we welcome them. Especially we welcome Navaz in Mumbai who arranged the delivery of the large floral tribute on the table alongside me.

In the book from which our first reading was taken there is well known another passage that begins:

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:
A time to be born and a time to die”*

If all we had of the Scriptures was that one book Ecclesiastes that would sum each of us up rather grimly. We are born. We die. Nothing that happens in between, (even the annual making of kasoundi), is of any lasting consequence from the point of view of eternity.

Fortunately Ecclesiastes is only one small book and its author’s bleak outlook is marginal to the general view of the Scriptures, which is that this short life is not all, and that what happens between being born and dying is, for each of us, eternally significant.

In our second reading from the Gospel of John we hear Jesus speak more positively assuring his disciples that the house of his heavenly Father has plenty of dwelling places – more than enough for all.

“In my Father’s House there are many dwelling places.”

The house he is referring to is not a palace and the resting places are not mansions as the old King James Bible worded it. Remembering the Middle Eastern context, we see that he is speaking of something like a caravan park - a caravansary.

It could be just an enclosed piece of land with spaces marked out for dossing down with one's animals. Or it could be a built structure with more comfortable individual rooms and a separate animal area. Either way it is the goal of the day's travel, and it was common practice to send someone of the travelling group on ahead to book places and make sure everything was ready for the arrival of the slower moving caravan. Jesus is saying that he is going on ahead to book and prepare places for those who travelling with him. Don't worry, he says, there will be plenty of room".

He knows because it is his Father's caravansary with which he is intimately familiar.

In her 80 years Jackie travelled far and saw much. From the rather conventional looking young girl on the back page of our service booklet to the exotic monk like figure on the cover, and on to the to the earthy, straight speaking, but wonderfully supportive, encouraging, intelligent, and independent woman that most of us knew.

Once when I asked her about making an annual commemoration of one of her departed family members, she characteristically said to me "Leave the dead alone to be in peace."

Sorry Jackie, we can't let you go and leave you alone without sharing all the wonderful memories we have of you, but we know you are at peace and in a better place in the care of the one who has lovingly prepared that place for you.

We commend you to his eternal hospitality trusting that he welcomes you with the words "Well done good and faithful servant. Welcome."

And we add:

Rest now in peace enjoying the fruit of your labours. **Amen.**



SMALL CHANGES MAKE A POSITIVE WORLD

These next articles provide some background and show some ways that parishioners are making positive contributions. Not surprisingly, some parishioners write about their gardens. Others rethink new and old experiences in the light of current thinking.

On St Francis' Day, our friend Mother Cecilia Francis talks about her relationship with St Francis.



“St Francis and I – A Journey”

Cecilia Francis

In mid-August 2021 I was admitted as a ‘Novice’ into the Anglican ‘Third Order of the Society of St Francis’ or TSSF. This step, for me, has involved a 6-year intentional searching out, often in discussion with my Spiritual Director, and a 7 month ‘Enquiry’ process where I read more and wrote my ‘Rule of Life’. As a Novice, I am in a 2-year Formation process and meet with my Novice Counsellor each 3 months, to discuss my ongoing reading and reflection.

The journey, though, began when, as a child, I was introduced to St Francis through Paul Gallico’s story, *The Small Miracle*, and the promise of one day visiting Assisi. The story is one of relationship, love, healing and hope – key themes in my Franciscan journey.

Other resonances for me with St Francis’ story – I suggest you explore it yourself - are the contrasts between his energy, creative freedom and awareness of his own dark places; that he knew his own struggles with faith and was not afraid to enter them alone, and also in honesty with his Brothers; the refreshing sense of how alive Christ and scripture was for him; and that the hope of transformation is always with us, to the very end of our lives...to mention just a few. My life experiences interweave with these - how faith has connected or disconnected, toward my expanding understanding of God. Change has been significant. Living

simply and justly have become increasingly important, as have relationships and their quality.

The 13th Century saint founded the 3rd Order, now worldwide, so that people who were not called to become Friars, Brothers or Sisters, could follow Christ in the pattern of St Francis and St Clare, as single, married, lay or ordained people, through whatever their ordinary daily or working life held. The Aim of TSSF is to ‘bear witness to the truth in Jesus... inspired by St Francis and his challenge to a life of *Humility, Love and Joy*’. The three ways of Service are *Prayer, Study and Work*, and all these inform our personal rule of life. Our TSSF community is dispersed and diverse, yet we commit to pray regularly for one another, to keep in touch and meet monthly as we are able.

And yes, Stephen and I have visited Assisi, twice now, the first triggering my intentional search!

Check out <http://tssf.org.au> to find out more.



The Church’s Concern With Ecology

Robert Gribben

What are we to make of this passionate concern? What’s this about the ‘Green Patriarch’ and even ‘The Green Pope’? Is this just a passing fad? Something dreamt up last week to energize a sagging church? Is it about party politics? I want to suggest that these issues are of central and universal concern to all Christians – and shared by people of other living faiths and ideologies - and have been for some time.

One could say it begins with the book of Genesis with its stories of the making of the cosmos, but perhaps its most important message has been misheard. Having created the heavens and the earth and all living things, God blessed human beings and gave them ‘dominion’ over all (Gen. 1:28). In return, God gave them everything they needed for life (vv. 29-31). ‘Dominion’, it turned out, was an unfortunate translation. The King James’s Version, which has taught generations of English readers, gave us ‘Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish (note!) the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea...’, and humankind certainly took over - until now we live in the Anthropocene Age, the

era when domination by humankind is its principal characteristic. Many in church and world have heard this, and repented, but many have done neither.

World Council of Churches

The first articulation of the problem appeared in the consultations of the World Council of Churches in the 1960s. A new programme began in 1966 with a conference in Geneva on Church and Society, ‘the first genuinely world Christian conference’ (it has been called) to focus on social and economic rather than theological issues.¹ Ecology emerged as a major concern until the Sixth Assembly (Vancouver 1983) adopted the theme ‘Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation’ which culminated in 1991 at the Canberra Assembly with its final document with ten affirmations on ecological issues.

The Orthodox churches

Meanwhile in Orthodox circles, the Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrius took his own initiative, and delivered on 1 September 1989 the first patriarchal message addressing concerns about creation and Christian responsibilities towards it, and named it as a day for prayer for the protection of the environment. The Archdeacon of Constantinople, Australian John Chryssavgis, suggests that the 1986 Pre-Synodical Pan-Orthodox Conference in Chambésy was the stimulus to Patriarch Demetrius and other Orthodox initiatives on the question, and it blended with the WCC activities. The Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, published three lectures on ecology, attributing the West’s loss of cosmic awareness largely to the rise of (Catholic) Scholasticism, while the Christian East retained it. He insisted that the human being was the ‘priest of creation’, standing at its peak and enabling it to survive by relating it to the uncreated God. He prefers this deep concept to our model of ‘stewardship’.²

The Roman Catholic Church

Most of the Orthodox Churches, both Eastern and Oriental, were members of the WCC, so we turn to the role of the Roman Catholic Church. Several encyclicals and authoritative statements had been published around this time, beginning as early as those of Pope Paul VI (e.g., *Populorum Progressio*, 1967). In 1972, he

¹ There were three Australian participants but no Anglican. Dr Davis McCaughey (on the WCC Faith and Order Commission), Ross Terrill (a political scientist, known to old SCMerS), both Presbyterians, and Michel Leigh, a Methodist. Alan Reid and Rachel Faggetter were stewards, and Vaughan Hinton was on media staff.

² I am quoting here from a chapter in Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartland (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies* OUP 2021, p. 362, and I have drawn on many other parts of the chapter by Kevin W. Irwin.

addressed the United Nations Conference on the Environment. At the start of his pontificate, Pope John Paul II, highlighted ‘the threat of the pollution of the natural environment’ in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979), warning too of the possibility of human self-destruction through its weapons. In 1987 he declared that ‘humans have a certain affinity with other creatures’ which also implies a ‘duty of cultivating and watching over the garden’ and made the most important observation that this ‘limits the use and dominion over things... we are subject to biological laws as well as moral laws’ (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*).



So much for ecological concern to be the latest fad. There has been a quite even development in all three of these principal ecclesiastical sources, representing the whole *oikoumene*, the ecumenical movement.

I will come now to the most recent significant developments.

Recent WCC explorations and statements have become more specific, e.g., on water issues. The Assembly at Porte Alegre in 2006 adopted a *Statement on Water for Life*, and there is an Ecumenical Water Network³. As we know, it inaugurated the *Time for Creation* prayer season in 2008 with updated internet resources, some of them linked with the work of their neighbour in Geneva, the United Nations Organization. There is a *Statement on UN Climate Change Conference* (COP21), the Paris Agreement, 2015.⁴ The theme has also been treated in some of the recent reports of bi-lateral dialogues, both internationally and nationally.

It may surprise some that there exists a ‘Religious and Scientific Committee of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’ which studies the fate of rivers and seas, which cover two-thirds of the world’s surface. The Committee gathers participants ‘at and on the bodies of water under discussion’ and these have included the Aegean Sea, the Danube and the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, the Amazon, the Arctic and the Mississippi River. Patriarch Bartholomew continues his predecessor’s presentations and liturgical celebrations on 1 September. I refer you to their

³ <https://www.oikoumene.org/what-we-do/ecumenical-water-network>

⁴ <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/statement-on-un-climate-change-conference-cop21-in-paris-december-2015>

published forms.⁵

Both Pope Benedict XVI and Francis have continued teaching on this subject. One of St John Paul's special emphases was on the connexion of the eucharist with the cosmos, so his 2003 encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*,⁶ and Pope Benedict built on this. In particular, Pope Francis's moving encyclical *Laudato Sí*, 'On Care for our Common Home' of 2015 should command our attention.⁷ There are many on-line resources to help with opening it up. He too has inaugurated a World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation to coincide with Patriarch Bartholomew's. As we know, both co-wrote a message with Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury this year.

The Anglican Communion



Lambeth Conference in 1998 called for greater visibility for efforts to express the bishops' ecological concerns, and the Anglican Communion Environmental Network⁸ was

recognized as the official network at Hong Kong (at ACC-12) in 2002. Its aims are:

- To encourage Anglicans to support sustainable environmental practices as individuals and in the life of their communities.
- To provide information about policies embraced by synods, councils and commissions, and especially by the instruments of Unity (Statements by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Resolutions and Reports of the Lambeth Conference and the Anglican Consultative Council)
- To support local initiatives by providing information about ideas and best practices developed around the communion.
- To share information about resources and initiatives that may be of value to Anglicans everywhere.
- To provide an opportunity for interested Anglicans to meet both as a formal

⁵ E.g., <https://www.omhksea.org/archives/16410> for 2021.

⁶ https://www.vatican.va/holy_father/special_features/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_20030417_ecclesia_eucharistia_en.html

⁷ https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html but it is easily obtained in printed form.

⁸ It can be found at <https://acen.anglicancommunion.org/> -see Reports, Links andc.

network, and informally via electronic media.

- Lifting up the voices of women and youth and telling their stories.

ACEN has produced a number of statements from consultations in recent years and supports the use of the Season of Creation.

Since other world communions have their own agencies on similar themes, concern for the Creation, can be said to be a truly ecumenical movement in time and space!



The Climate Action Group of St Mary's Parish

Helen McCallum

A reflection on its formation, its Purpose and Framework as endorsed by Parish Council, and on one person's journey to getting here.

Saint Augustine of Hippo said, "Hope has two beautiful daughters, their names are anger and courage. Anger that things are the way they are, and courage to see that they do not remain as they are."

One contemporary issue, which deserves both our anger and our courage, is the state of the world in relation to Climate Change. A group of parishioners at St Mary's has formed, with the intention of doing what we can to reduce our adverse ecological impact upon the world, both in our church activities and in our personal lives.

We are not alone. Several churches, including the Cathedral, are active in encouraging practical and spiritual steps. The Anglican Board of Missions (ABM) has produced a splendid series of studies in order to guide groups in useful directions.

St Mary's used as a stepping-off point the ABM *Climate for Change* Studies, which ends up by urging people of faith and hope to become activists for a sustainable future, since our children and grandchildren will inherit the fruit of our decisions.

In the long winter lockdown in Victoria 2020 five members of St Mary's parish

joined together for six weeks to engage with ABM's Five Studies on Climate for Change, written by Russell Rollason.

The Studies show the interconnected challenges facing humanity in the 21st Century: Climate change – Pandemic- Degradation of the Biosphere - Growing inequalities within and between countries. The Studies have a realistic perspective on current global disasters but are always balanced by Christian Faith and Hope. There is an opportunity to love God, our neighbour and all of creation.

For me personally, this opportunity to be part of the group study came at a time when I had become increasingly anxious about the global, national and local responses towards lowering carbon emissions. This Christian-led study gave me heart that our St Mary's faith community and we as individuals, could change behaviours and learn new ways of reducing waste and of using energy in a more sustainable way.

Later in May 2021 a few of the same parishioners, attended an Environmental webinar, organised by the Anglican Social Responsibility Committee. This gave us a connection with other parishes who were taking on the challenge of living in a more sustainable way.

Following on from this the Climate Action Group (CAG) was formed. We offered an open invitation to all parishioners to attend a first meeting, following which a Purpose and Framework Document was drafted. This document was then presented to Parish Council (see below for the contents as approved by Council).

Interlude - A Personal Journey

Could I take a brief moment to talk of my personal pathway to involvement with the CAG action?

The natural world has always been part of my life. I grew up post-war in the outer newly developing suburb of Vermont Victoria, surrounded by the beauty of the bush which has had a strong and lasting impact on me. My regular childhood experiences included walking home after a day at primary school along a tree-lined bush road, listening to the sounds of birds and frogs, smelling the fragrances

from the bush plants and trees, and loving the swathes of now-rare native orchids. At this present stage of my life I treasure those early-life experiences and I understand that they have informed my awareness of our connectedness and dependence on a healthy environment.

Later, with a growing family living in North Melbourne in the early seventies, I was fortunate to read Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*. This pioneer of the conservation movement taught me many things: to regard and pay attention to where and how our food was grown, to think about what non-toxic cleaning products to use in the home, and how to keep the garden free from pollutants that would harm bird and insect life. Knowledge about reducing the use of plastics, about shunning pesticides and herbicides, and about adopting careful waste management were part of our family life.

So I have to say that I love being part of the St Mary's community, and I am grateful for its leadership in teaching and preaching, for its music and singing, and for its commitment to prayer. I am glad to join with fellow parishioners in order to explore and bring about change which can lighten our carbon footprint on and around our plot in North Melbourne.

The following is the Purpose and Framework statement of the CAG, arising out of its initial meetings. It was submitted to Parish Council, and was approved in the following form.

St Mary's Climate Action Group – Purpose and Framework

Faith-based rationale

The members of the Climate Action Group (CAG) assert that our identity as people of the Christian faith compels us to care for God's creation and to be stewards of the earth. Our scripture tells us that "God ... has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:18) in the world. We also acknowledge that our Parish and society more generally are facing a Climate Emergency. CAG members firmly believe that we are therefore called to act in the reconciliation of the broken relationship between humanity and creation by taking steps as a Parish to exemplify best practice in addressing the Climate Emergency.

Scientific Resources

The primary scientific rationale for the CAG is drawn from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)'s 2021 Summary for Policymakers – Sixth Assessment Report on the physical science basis for climate change, [*Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*](#), and other material from the IPCC and Climate Council.

Purpose

The purpose of the CAG is to amplify both action and discussion on climate change and care for country within the parish more broadly and to act as a conduit for resources, events, debate and advocacy. It is our goal to act as a launching point for information and action to all members of our church, not to isolate climate action to one group within the parish. Furthermore, the CAG seeks to advocate to and inform the leadership and parish council of initiatives and actions we recommend the parish undertake to better care for creation in each of the areas below.

Areas of focus

The CAG has three areas of focus and goal setting.

Individual and Parish level actions: Informing and recommending actions that individual parish members and our church can take to better care for creation e.g lowering our carbon footprint, incorporating creation care into worship.

Education and Public Commitment actions: Finding and sharing resources on climate change and creation care amongst the parish to generate ongoing discussion around the topic with the goal of moving towards a parish-wide public commitment on our views on climate action.

Political and Community level actions: Partnering with relevant organisations such as [Australian Religious Response to Climate Change](#) (ARRCC), [Five Leaf Eco Awards](#), [Social Responsibilities Committee](#) (Melbourne Diocese) and [Common Grace](#) to recommend the involvement of the parish and its members in larger-scale advocacy on climate issues e.g. encouraging members to attend peaceful protest, organising public events and visible messages of creation care support.

People involved in the CAG

Many people have been involved in these beginnings of the journey at St Mary's into the Climate Change issue.

Initially, the group who undertook the ABM studies. Ewan, Beverley, Susan, Helen and Richard

The currently constituted CAG: Audrey, Ewan, Helen, Paul, and Michael N

Father Jan and the Parish Council who have been essential in their encouragement and formal approval of our directions.

Mother Dorothy who is our liaison with Parish Council, and who has helped us through designing and implementing the Season of Creation through September and first week of October ending on St Francis Day with the blessing of pets.

Geoff who has hosted and chaired the many zoom meetings, and who has enlivened and encouraged the Parish in ecological and environmental matters.

The parishioners who have been involved with discussions and meetings, some of whom who have progressively joined in the work. We hope that more parishioners will join to help in whatever way they can, as the work that we need to do expands.



T.I.S. 100 All creatures of our God and King, v. 4

*Dear Mother Earth, who day by day
unfoldest blessings on our way,
O praise Him, alleluia!
The flowers and fruits that in thee grow,
let them His glory also show;
O praise Him, O praise Him,
alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*



Conserving and Renewing One Small Urban Patch on Planet Earth

Ewan Ogilvy

I have just been re-reading *A Joint Message for the Protection of Creation* prepared by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, Pope Francis and the Archbishop of Canterbury. For me, these Church Leaders have crystallised key issues in a very persuasive way. They acknowledge the distressed state of Planet Earth and remind us all of the very uneven and intergenerational consequences of our lack of care.

More particularly, **these leaders urge us to eat, travel, spend, invest and live differently, thinking not only of immediate interest and gains but also of future benefits.** While I try very hard to be a conscious consumer and tread lightly on my small patch in inner city Melbourne, it has been a very uneven journey, with episodic bursts of activity and much time devoted to questionable causes, or at least causes with questionable outcomes.

Herewith just a few reflections on this journey of living differently.

My current abode [a studio unit] three levels above ground, in a six level building at the north end of Swanston Street, occupies about 40 square metres. It has just two rooms, a bathroom and a [very] multi-purpose room. For me there are many advantages in occupying a small unit. Fairly obviously, it takes less resources to furnish, maintain, heat, cool and light-up. For the worst hoarder in the world, any confined space provides an important disincentive to buying unnecessary stuff.

This home has no balcony, and beyond the smattering of greenery at our main entry, no meaningful garden. My front door opens onto an almost windowless corridor, just like the seven other units on level three. I hear my neighbours come and go, but rarely see them. Just like the birds, when not drowned out with the morning peak hour traffic, I hear them but rarely see them. For many residents in the inner city, our street trees and historic median strips provide precious green cover. Since I feel rather removed from the natural world, I'm ill equipped to talk about it. I do have a wonderful view looking south towards the city, but, here too, the dominant elements are buildings.

Occupying any unit in a block does come with some disadvantages. It has certainly reduced choices on the utility front. My solar [but gas boosted] hot water system is inefficient, and I suspect more reliant upon gas as the primary energy source than intended. My partial solution to this inadequacy has been to disconnect the hot water to all but the shower outlet. "Moth balling" the gas fired cooking rings was slightly more straightforward. Portable induction cooking units provide a helpful alternative.

Other energy related decisions were relatively easy to introduce. These included the introduction of Led Lights and the selection of an energy retailer that provided the option to acquire 100% accredited green power. Dealing with "waste" appropriately was a much bigger challenge. Fortunately, I'm within walking distance of a community compost hub which can usually take all my organic

waste. Sadly, this facility cannot operate during Covid-19 Lockdowns. Our Church leaders have also reminded us all to consider how we invest and spend ... and do it differently. This goes to the question of our banking and superannuation arrangements [for example]. I have been able to choose a Superannuation provider that includes an eco-option. While this choice doesn't guarantee that my provider has no exposure to the destructive fossil fuel industry, I think it unlikely that any exposure would be a major contributor to investment returns. In a similar vein, my banking choices have been almost totally influenced by the extent to which a bank has **avoided** financing environmentally destructive fossil fuel projects.

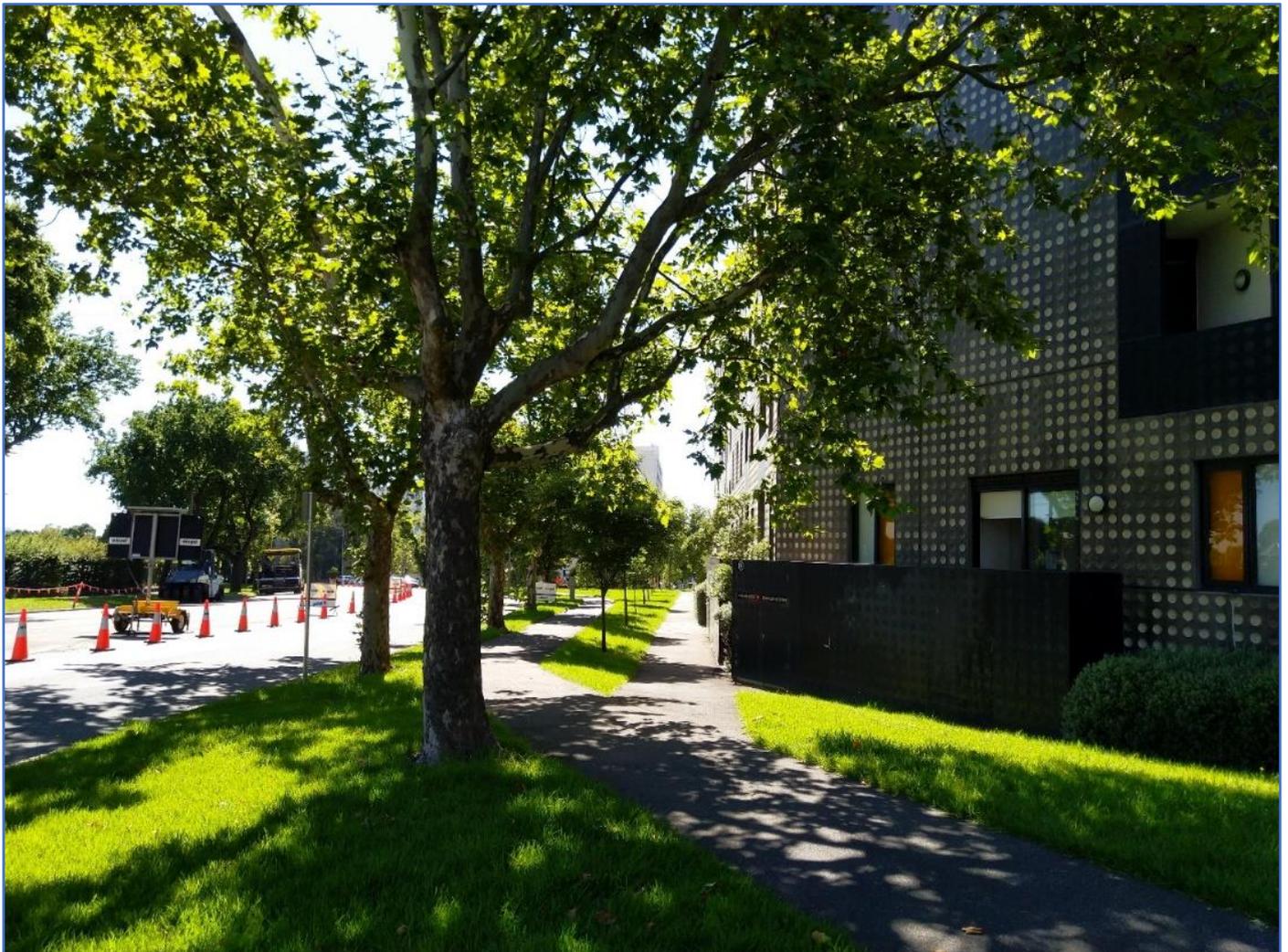


Figure 1: Lytton reserve at 81 Cemetery Rd East, Carlton

For many people, travel for work and recreation presents an important opportunity to at least consider less fossil fuel dependent modes of travel. For me, the choice has been relatively easy. Most of my places of employment have been a short walk or tram ride from home; so owning/running a motorised vehicle was never a necessity. Similarly, while air travel is a convenient mode for long distance

travel, I've always been much more comfortable with the land based alternatives [at least within Australia].

While reduced use of the fossil fuel powered travel options has been relatively easy to achieve, I've found the digital forms of communication much more difficult to manage responsibly. The built-in obsolescence of computer hardware and operating systems has been a major challenge. My attempts at replacing software operating systems that are no longer supported/updated with "open source" Linux system software have been quite mixed. While there is much discussion [in some circles] of the need to promote the "circular economy" [to reduce/eliminate waste], many manufacturers of high tech items [like mobile phones and computers] push new models onto the market so regularly [and enthusiastically] one has to wonder whether our inclination to consume more and more stuff will ever become aligned with the resource constraints of planet earth. I conclude with an exhortation from our Church Leaders:

“Together, as communities, churches, cities and nations, we must change route and discover new ways of working together to break down the traditional barriers between peoples, to stop competing for resources and start collaborating.”

Start collaborating. Now that's a suggestion worth promoting.



Beautiful in its Time

Paul Eikelboom

“This picture is of blossoms found in the park next to the Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre, which I can see from my balcony. For me, COVID 19 puts some of the gloomier parts of the verses from Ecclesiastes 3:1-15 (bit.ly/Eccl3-1-15) particularly ‘a time to refrain from embracing’, in pretty stark relief.

I was gutted when I heard that Melbourne would be going into lockdown for the sixth time. It was the first time the news really hit me, and like so many others, wondered when this season of lockdowns would end. I prefer to avoid the negatives in life, so I focus on the parts of the verses here that talk about embracing, dancing, laughing, and building. However, it's hard to remain optimistic when the challenges and difficulties, not just related to COVID, linger.



A few other lines from the text also stick out: First, ‘He has made everything beautiful in its time’. Everything. It’s easier to notice the beauty in the blossoms, but I’m reminded that there is even beauty in the difficulties. Where’s the beauty in COVID 19? The text says there is beauty there, but where? The other line that jumps out at me is ‘Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before’. These blossoms were here before, and will blossom again in a year’s time. I’m encouraged that life continues despite the headlines, and we see nature’s beauty in different ways each season.

I wonder how many people notice these blossoms as they wait to get their vaccine; a reminder of life continuing, warmer weather, a new growing season, and hopefully, a chance to reconnect with friends and family, unhindered by lockdowns and travel restrictions. I also wonder how often I miss these reminders...”

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Climate Change, what am I doing?

Pam Cox

Back in grade 5 our granddaughter had a project on climate change. She chose to do hers on a theme she had first experienced on trip to the Zoo, called ‘*WHEN BALLOONS FLY BIRDS DIE*’.

Balloons are usually associated with pleasure and this awful consequence of their

use became a topic of discussion in our family, awakening me to one simple activity that has become so destructive to our beautiful wildlife and the environment. Our granddaughter is now in year 11. In the years that have passed since the original project she has often talked about the careless actions we need to change to care for our Mother Earth.

And this led me to noticing the number of balloons used for water bombing play around the water fountain in our local park, discarded when the fun is long gone. On a number of occasions, I have collected the balloons and, with the help of my granddaughter, sent them with an explanatory letter to the local council, trying to raise awareness of how this simple act of fun is destroying our natural world. Abandoning burst balloons seems such a small action but can have such a devastating impact.

With our world now experiencing extreme climate changes, extinction of species and environmental destruction, in the midst of a global pandemic that has virtually ground us to a halt, the most standout thing for me is that, with fewer planes in the air and cars being used less frequently in lockdowns, we are seeing beautiful clear blue skies. Are we also seeing more birds and local wildlife? Or is it that I am cherishing what I have more than ever due to Covid?

Whatever it is, I am cherishing my life, in all its ups and downs, and praying and hoping we are not only respecting the sanctity of self and others but the sacredness of our Mother Earth and all she has given us.

However small my action is, together with your own small action we can all make a difference. Noticing nature and listening to her wisdom, we are guests in her presence. What kind of guests do we want to be?



Bondi, Here I Come: One La(z)y-Person's Approach

Paul Eikelboom

Climate Change is kind of like creeping obesity: I keep doing the things that are comfortable, all the while my doctor's advice goes from gentle encouragements to ultimatums. Eventually I look in the mirror and recognise that if I keep going down this path, something *uncomfortable*, like say, a heart attack, will make me wish I'd made better choices earlier on. Before, maintaining a healthy slim figure would have been easy; now, turning heads at Bondi Beach for all the right reasons is going to take more effort than the COVID vaccine roll-out.

Our world has been steadily gorging itself on carbon for decades, and evidence is mounting that our world is decidedly unhealthy. Climate scientists had warned for decades about exactly the kinds of climate change impacts we experience more regularly: increased bushfire seasons, sea level rise, coral bleaching events, and record-breaking temperatures making parts of the planet too hot to live in or produce food. The current situation in Madagascar, likely the first recorded climate-change induced famine, is one such example. We are now hearing ultimatums about how we need to reduce our carbon dependence now if we want our planet to survive. Slimming down at a collective level is going to take considerable effort.

Fortunately, on an individual level, some changes are so easy you wonder why you hadn't done them before. Forming new eco-friendly habits after moving to Australia was much simpler than I'd anticipated. For example, buying Ecostore's plant-based cleaning products. They may not be the cheapest products tucked away on Woolworths' lower shelves, but they're not expensive either, and I was pleasantly surprised to find that unlike some eco-friendly products that cost much and perform little, these ones actually worked.

Usually, I gravitate towards those eco-friendly choices that are financially appealing (read: I can be a cheapskate). I'm not keen on spending a shedload of money on electricity, so my apartment is south facing to avoid the sun, and I finally started following the sage advice from my parents, putting on a jumper when it's a bit chilly inside. To avoid the gag reflex at the cost of new clothes, I look at gently used op shop clothing for the basics (notable exceptions include shoes, socks, and underwear), and then wear it to the point of no return. Some

coffee places will offer a discount of up to 50 cents if you bring your own KeepCup. At that rate, after approximately 50 cups of Melbourne's finest brew, my small KeepCup has paid for itself, there's less in landfill, AND I show that cheapness can still look sharp!

Some of the best changes have been ones I could maintain with little to no effort. Powershop offsets 100% its electricity and gas with carbon certificates and sends reminders to your phone to get discounts by purchasing power in advance. Switching to Bank Australia means that my hard-earned, rarely spent money isn't being loaned to the fossil fuel industry, going instead to renewable energy projects. Even the stainless-steel filter for my coffee press, for use on those days when making my own caffeine hit is preferable to spending \$4.50 at a café, means I don't have to worry about paper filters ever again, all the while maintaining those subtle coffee flavours before I add too much milk.

Can more be done? Absolutely. Did I make all these changes at once? Absolutely not. As I got used to one change, I saw that other changes could be made, and gradually shifted as the opportunity arose. Whenever I finally get through my 2L bottle of conventional shampoo, sometime in early 2024, what's to keep me from changing to Ecostore's shampoo or another similarly environmentally friendly brand? If I look for a newer fridge, why not consider the long-term energy savings and invest in one that is more efficient? And if at some point my paltry millennial savings reach a point where I could buy or build a house, solar panels, an electric hob, rain collectors, and possibly a water recycling system would all be possibilities to consider.

It can take an annoying amount of time to see the results of positive change, but making those steps is better than doing nothing, and the first steps don't have to be difficult. The planet wants its Bondi Beach body back. What could you do differently to get it there?

*My views are my own. I receive no commission for the products and services that I have promoted.

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Drimdaven Garden at Gregory Lodge

Heather Harper

Last Saturday I watched with joy a tiny elderly Chinese woman, a resident here in Gregory Lodge, visiting Drimdaven garden for the first time. Yunzhen was left for me to mind for half an hour. Her delight in the garden was a pleasure to witness. Yunzhen carefully and slowly made her way around the raised boxes, nothing was missed. She speaks no English but her response to my handing her some crushed cardamon leaves was just so wonderful to watch. She knew exactly what they were, most say "It smells good, what is it?" My four fantail pigeons showed off on cue much to her delight, coming right up close and feeding on seed around her feet.



After Yunzhen was collected and taken inside, I reflected on the afternoon. Yunzhen had enjoyed it but I enjoyed her visit too. The garden is very important to me. Many of you will know that I have been in Gregory Lodge for nine years. Graeme and I were in a state of a shock finding ourselves in Aged Care when under seventy. The lack of access to outside was awful, something we had not valued until we no longer had it.

After talks with management, we were asked to take on the vegetable garden behind the car park. We were unaware of its existence, as the car park was of no interest to us. We were given two trowels and left to get on with the job. A former employee had organized a concrete slab and six rustic meter square raised beds spaced to allow wheelchair access. He had worked there with a small band of residents. Unfortunately, when the founder resigned there was no successor, it went untouched for seven years until we arrived.

Graeme encouraged me and made creative suggestions as he weeded with children's tools. I dug, weeded, and cleared until we were finally able to plant some seedlings. We both became obsessed with the project. The garden was named, the perimeter was cleared, most of our time was spent happily pottering and dreaming up wonderful improvements to encourage others to visit. We were amazed at the disinterest shown.

One morning I went out the back door and found six very large trees had been cut to the fence line and were being mulched. The Manager was unaware of this (Freemason's homes have a manager responsible for the inside and another for the outside, with very little, if any communication between them) The policy was 'Cut to the fence line, it saves maintenance.' Of course, the trees died and much of the garden's charm disappeared. In desperation, I wrote to the CEO telling him about our saga with the garden. I asked him for a frame on the fence to espalier a tree on and a security fence so grandchildren and Dementia Unit residents were safe out there. Imagine my surprise when the very next day he replied, offering me six things, including the fence, extra taps, some unexpected seating, and a shed.

The Manager asked if I would write his letters to the CEO in future as I had fared better than he had!

The shed, however lovely for me, was a constant object of torment and frustration for Graeme. He was unable to see what was inside. The doors opened more than halfway across the path, his wheelchair could get around the door it drove him crazy that it was all mine. Twice he fell into the garden attempting to get a look inside, I needed to call staff to get him back in his chair.

The Drimdaven Garden, as we had named it, was a place of great happiness hard work creativity and sharing for us both. After Graeme's death I invited many of our friends for a bar que and the unveiling of a brass plaque to his memory. For quite some time I felt his presence with me while I gardened. I freely admit to spending far too much money out there. The kitchen at Gregory Lodge only uses peeled chopped frozen vegetables so produce from the garden is displayed on a trolley in the foyer. Passers-by are asked to make an "appropriate donation" for vegetables they select.



Covid 19 has meant no visitors and they were the most generous supporters. The garden runs at a considerable loss but making money was never a goal. I am very fortunate to have access to this space, though, of course, it is not mine and any and everyone is welcome.

Staff and visitors have taught me so much: the Nepalese cleaner who suggested I pull out the pumpkins as they were not productive enough for the area they covered, likewise

sweetcorn and onions; Deng, the Vietnamese

kitchen hand who ticks me off for buying seeds while I am

throwing seed in the compost. He is very observant

“See the cumquat is growing from the root stock that is why it isn't doing well”. He

almost always spots things in the

garden before I do and can be relied on to do the necessary in my absence for whatever reason. In the first year I planted tomatoes, I proudly tied them up as my

mother had. The next afternoon I chanced to look out a window and there was Frank (husband of a resident) retying my efforts. Gina (wife of a resident) told me in Italian English) "If I here next year and you here next year, I show you to do the tomatoes" We both were and she did.



I had no idea when I planted quince trees and rhubarb that they were unknown to the majority of people who live or work here. They want chillies, chillies and more chillies, coriander and capsicums. I pulled out a six foot high mustard plant. in a flash one of the staff tore to bits. Of course, these things work both ways. I have taught, potted bits and pieces, lent books, given samples and tried to explain my rudimentary philosophy for Drimdaven Garden. My three bins of compost in the making and huge storage pit bring many comments. It all works well, the most

difficult link is getting the kitchen to contribute.

After nearly four years working alone out there with the pigeons for company and the cheery chirping of the finches, I now have an offsider. Henk is a Dutch bachelor. He bought himself out to see what I was up to and stayed. We are as different as chalk and cheese and work well together. It is a privilege to be able to garden in my style while sharing the productivity and simple beauty of this garden of concrete and railway sleepers with others.



The Garden

Father Jan

1. We plow the fields and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand.
God sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes, and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.

Refrain:

*All good gifts around us are sent from heav'n above.
We thank you, God, we thank you, God, for all your love.*

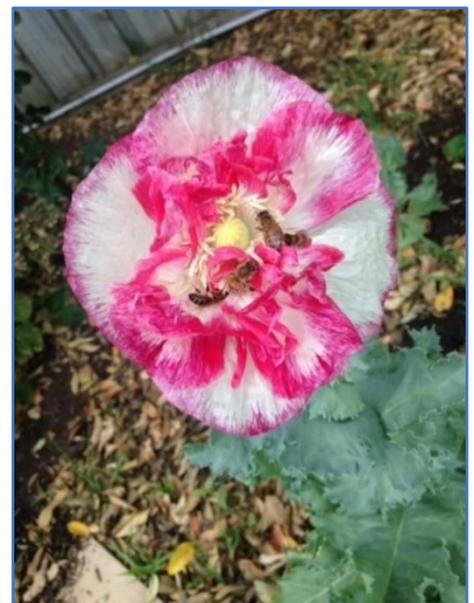
2. You only are the Maker
of all things near and far.
You paint the wayside flower,
you light the evening star.
The winds and waves obey you,
by you the birds are fed;
much more to us, your children,
you give our daily bread. [Refrain]

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3. We thank you, then, Creator,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time, and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
Accept the gifts we offer
for all your love imparts,
and what you most would welcome:
our humble, thankful hearts. [Refrain]

Source: [Voices Together #747](#)

This hymn is probably well known to many of you as it is perhaps one of the most traditional Harvest Thanksgiving hymns used every year in parishes where Harvest Thanksgiving is celebrated. In the Northern hemisphere, the traditional time for harvest celebrations is autumn and the first Sunday in October is often reserved for that occasion. One of the difficulties for us in the Southern hemisphere is that the equivalent time for our harvest celebrations conflicts with Lent and even at time Easter itself.

This hymn, however, really transcends it being limited to only Harvest time, as it speaks so beautifully about the great goodness and bounty that God gives us each and every day. As a gardener I am always in awe at how a tiny seed falls on the earth, and through nothing that I do, is able to grow into the most beautiful flower. I am reminded of this every time I try to grow poppies, one of the most difficult of all flowers. I will throw perhaps 1000 seeds into my garden and then wait. Sometimes I will be rewarded with lots of plants and flowers, sometimes nothing at all. One of the things I have learned is that poppies will not transplant. As soon as the roots are disturbed, they sulk and die.



I find that they seem to like growing in unexpected places, on the edge of the lawn, the cracks in the brickwork, just about anywhere other than where I want them to grow. I have learned to just leave them alone and let them come up where they will. The more I try to molly-coddle them, the poorer results I get. It's a great lesson in life too, don't try to organise everything and control everything, just let God do what God wants with creation. My Dutch sensibilities try to put everything in order, and I do do some of that in my garden, but not all plants respond, certainly not poppies. I guess the Dutch like tulips so much because tulips are thoroughly predictable and can be organised into straight lines, even whole fields of straight lines.



There is a lovely balance in nature between order and wildness, between growth and decay. The challenge for us in living lives more tuned to the natural world is to see the beauty in a thorn as much as in a rose. Growing up I used to love watching the Adams Family on tv and always laughed at Letitia when she arranged flowers because she would cut the



blooms off the rose stems and arrange the barren thorny stems, but they really do have a beauty about them perhaps the same beauty we see in the Crown of Thorns that Christ wore and the blood, red like that of the rose.

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Creation - A Selfish Love or Selfless Love

Deepa JainGupta

Creation has been something very personal, emotional and a deep connect of my soul to my Lord.

I came to this country six years ago and was trying to find a place of worship. But, found none. Till suddenly one day at 8am, I heard some Church bells ringing nearby. Something in me urged me to go and search for them.

It was a new country, new colour and new people. I knew absolutely nothing, was very awkward and nervous inside me.

Collecting myself together, trying to be in one piece, gathering all the courage I had in me, feeling like an intruder, I slowly tiptoed into the Church. Scared like a kitten I was, hiding in a corner, trying to be as inobtrusive as possible.

And Lah! there I was completely caught and identified like a thief in a den. I trembled, I mumbled and sat in the back most chair, wishing I could disappear in the air.

I was wondering whether I had done right or wrong. Had I been better off not being overtaken by my impulses? Would I be an intruder told to leave or not? I did not know.

I pretended and tried to imitate the participation such that I should not look like a fool. And boy I did it well. I passed the class. I was greeted at the end of the mass and this was the moment of Creation with my Lord.

Time proceeded and I faced very strong challenges from being attacked, molested, to being taken to the dark tunnels of prison and courtrooms. I stood before the judges shivering like a leaf in a storm. What held my feet to ground and let me stand was the faith in my Lord. Every moment I passed these dark tunnels, I just folded my hands with humble prayer, Oh Lord! if I am your creation and I have not let you down, then let this storm pass me unharmed and if I am your child who has created the sin, I be punished.

Today five years later the creation of God blessed me unbounty that I got a house exactly in this period of the year called creation. It was creation of my life anew. For everyone it was Covid time: dark, intense, brooding, anxious within, but for me it was a creation.

A forlorn green patch, withered, unattended, vandalised for years, lay bare. It reminded me of my past. With restrictions to move anywhere beyond the four walls of the house, I had not much at hand.

Possessing an inherent love for nature and greens, something in me prompted me to tend it. I started tending it like a newborn baby, a creation of God. And Lah! came September; the spring started blooming colours of red, yellow, pink, white, such that people living in the surroundings enjoyed the creation and magic of spring. It created a brotherhood, resilience, connection and peace to the distorted ruffled minds. It created a sight of pleasure and harmony. I plucked some twigs and planted them in my small balcony. It created so much colour to my life that when I got up from my bed I saw from my window the flowers creating a halo of colours, humming birds creating a sound of music, creating exhilaration to my body and soul.

If I got tense, my flowers talked to me. They said, “look at me, I create colour and die for you (wither), I give me to create honey for you, I cut myself to heal your wounds (herbs), I create food (pollens) and create life, which is for you, I exhale my lungs to give life to your lungs (oxygen) but what do you do? Do you create as I create? You also are a Creation of God as I am. Do you do as I do?”



Karborr Barre: A Small Corner

Beverley Phillips

My move to Durdidwarrah, that had its genesis in 2005, was first and foremost about life security and finding a place where I could live. So it was with some shock that years later I heard myself introduced as an ‘environmentalist’, a title I would wear with honour but am not sure is deserved.

In this article, I will try to give a snapshot of *Karborr Barre* (Koala Ground in

Waddawurrung), so named for me by Uncle David and an acknowledgement of the traditional owners where I reside. In size this property is 25 acres, delineated on 1 boundary by an extensive merino lamb wool farm, the second boundary is 'Savannah track' (yes you can find that on Google maps), the 3rd being the Brisbane Ranges National Park (the property is triangular).

I will refrain from talking about planning and building here, sufficient to say that Nick Walter (Linda and Nick well known to so many) designed my home for me. A gift beyond measure and so beautifully gentle and 'in place'. I never cease to be grateful for 'my home' and that with his encouragement it was designed to make as little impact, be as self sufficient, and unobtrusive as possible. Perhaps the fact that birds nest on the eaves (swallows), blue tongues live underneath, copper heads have visited, the skinks sunbathe on the front ramp in summer, the roos and wallaby graze around the entire building, the antechinus sometimes invade (and are gently caught and sent packing up in the Park), and maybe most especially before the numbers of koalas began to fall, I have had such visitors at the front verandah. There are also the myriads of insects, spiders and moths, plus the mosquitoes and flies that are not quite so welcome.

Some visitors here have been quite shocked when they have driven up the track and see where I live. In their eyes (and I totally understand this) they see a bushfire nightmare. There is angst and consternation as to why I have not made a buffer zone between the vegetation and the house. The simple answer is it would do little good; it would only encourage further pest grass and weed infestation and destroy precious unique vegetation, including as it happens, a few plants that are on our 'vulnerable' state vegetation list. To mow, rake, remove, for me is to destroy and not live in harmony with this environment.

I well record with joy the day that two officers from '*Land for Wildlife*' visited whilst Liz Donoghue and I were on the property prior to anything being built, with one, Beth, saying they would be delighted to welcome this place on to their register. Some years later, after much research and careful consideration, I approached *Trust for Nature* to covenant the property and thus protect this place as best I can. Subsequent to that, the discovery of a portion of a green stone axe initiated an *Aboriginal Heritage* overlay on one part of the property.

Whether I am out for an exercise stretch down the track, or a roam seeing what is showing or happening, what the various birds or critters are up to, this place never ceases to teach me new things. Simple ones, like the other day I deliberately went

out to find whether a particular leopard orchid was showing in a place I had seen it before. No sign, I headed back passing through myriads of golden moth orchids and just suddenly realized there was one different amidst the rest – the one I had been looking for, in a place I had not seen previously. Then there are the instances when you think you have discovered a weedy orchid and check only to find it is a fairly rare one and another new discovery to add to the nearly 200 items already on the vegetation list. Every year there has been a new discovery, perhaps a note on my lack of observance, but I prefer to think of it as nature revealing itself to me. So many of our plants are minute, with the most precious design and purpose, all essential to the whole, providing food and life to others. Others only reveal themselves to our eyes dependent on the climate, and so it was that for the early years, when the drought was impacting so deeply, much of the vegetation did not reveal itself until the sub layer began to moisten. Then there was the appearance of one orchid species that reputedly is not seen unless burnt over. Our conclusion – the ground got so hot with our excessive summer heat that it triggered them off. We do see change here, some of it very concerning and obviously a result of hotter, dryer times. The snow gums are struggling, but they are still here! Then there are invasions of either fauna or insects, ‘out of balance’ or out of their usual bounds that sometimes have devastating effects on some trees.

Recently the black and some silver wattles (the feathery leaved sort) have been stripped bare by fireblight beetles, a native, and perhaps an event that reputedly happens every 10 years or so. It will be interesting and concerning to see whether the wattles bounce back. At the present time they appear totally dead. The problem is that what was usual in the past, now at times does not have the ‘usual’ outcome, because the global environmental changes we are experiencing do not afford the vegetation to recover as we have always known. Locally this is ever visible in the part of the range that was severely burnt in the 2006 major fires that burnt ferociously for 10 days. The drought did not break for another 5 years, so the hoped and expected epicormic regrowth, the sprung and awakened seed that would usually respond to fire, was either so ferociously burnt that it was extinct, or when it sprang to life, the rains, winter moisture did not eventuate, and or the roos, desperate for food, or the feral deer and goats extinguished the re-growth. Some 14 years later this can still be ‘read’ in some areas here, and as a side note, we are constantly pleading and trying to stave off DLWEP planned burns. I do note though that recently there has been some news that ‘cultural’ burning may be trialed in our region soon. We can only hope.

So, in conclusion, I would welcome any visits, but please don’t just scan your

eyes and look for extraordinary showy flashy and bold plants. At your feet, if you read it carefully you may see leaves that you can know will in maybe 3 months time, bear an orchid. Or it might be a funny fungus, working away at the soil. Or the reemergence of one of the many daisies that provide food for the multitude of insects. I needed to learn this, and am still learning, and I keep forgetting, but now I try and “read” all that green stuff on the ground; and become aware of the sounds the birds are making – letting everyone know I am around, or that there is another threat, or that they are feeding, or something else. I learn to listen to those little sounds that just might be a jacky lizard, snake, or frog or.....

Am I an environmentalist? I don't know. What I am passionate about though is the preservation of this place, to share its wonder; and an essential part of this passion is my deep concern and fear for the future if we don't begin to listen to the world around us and make change.



Sustainable by Design

Christine and Elsdon Storey

For the past 16 years or so we have been blessed with the care of two very different gardens. We have always enjoyed gardens and gardening, but our first garden was very small by choice, due to our busy professional lives at that time. It was divided into a front and back garden, and a lightwell, as our home - like many others in the inner city - is a terrace house on a long narrow block measuring 5m x 44m. To optimise sunlight, we deliberately bought a house with a west-facing back garden and north-facing light well, but shade still makes fruit and vegetable gardening challenging. We have two established deciduous trees in our back garden, a jacaranda and a Japanese magnolia, which provide beautiful flowers, shade in summer and habitat for birds. By raising some of the garden beds, we have been able to establish a lush understory of flowering shrubs that attract beneficial pollinators such as bees, butterflies and some birds. Our kitchen table is in a fully (double) glazed atrium which overlooks our back garden, providing a calming vista for which we are very grateful. The fragrant wisteria in the front garden, currently in full bloom, was admired by someone walking past our place just recently, who thanked us for its beautiful perfume, giving us great

joy! The lightwell is very protected but in shade for much of the day, however ferns and small hanging orchids thrive with minimal care and provide a peaceful outlook from our dining room cum home office space. Our long roof facing north supports solar panels and we try to use our various electrical appliances during the day, when we generate our own electricity. Our double brick walls are shared with our neighbours on both sides, providing energy efficiency, by minimising heat loss in winter and reducing radiant heat exposure in summer. During lockdown, when our time spent in our country garden has been limited, our city garden has received much more attention and has been much more prolific as a result, and most uplifting at this time.

We were both familiar with Ballarat from our respective childhoods and medical school days, and loved its history and surrounding bushland, and we also planned to be involved with medical teaching at Ballarat Base Hospital (or possibly in Geelong) and local musical activities. Bev's twenty acres, bordering on the Brisbane Ranges, was an inspiration. We located a 5 acre bush block for sale at Lal Lal, just off the Midland Highway. The small hamlet of Lal Lal is named after the nearby Lal Lal falls on the west branch of the Moorabool River. It is an ancient sacred site for the local Indigenous people and means "dashing waters".

Given Bev's vast knowledge of bushland in the Moorabool catchment (along the Midland Highway connecting Ballarat with Geelong) and with her appraisal and encouragement, we purchased this block at the end of Victoria's devastating millennial drought. Our area is regrowth forest after substantial deforestation during the nineteenth century, when wood was felled for steam generation and domestic wood fires for heating. The area is now zoned rural residential comprising blocks of no smaller than 5 acres, to maintain a bird corridor in this agricultural area.

Our country garden was purchased around sixteen years ago as we started to consider our retirement plans, envisaging fresh country air and cultivation of a fruit and vegetable garden. The latter proved challenging, given the severity of frosts in the area, the iron-like hardness of the clay subsoil with only a thin covering of topsoil, and the depredations of the local wildlife (cue black wallaby). Soil was brought in to fill raised vegetable beds and create mounds for fruit tree mounds, and a gravity-feed drip irrigation system laid out. The entire area of about 40 m circumference was protected with netting to a height of 2.4m, as well as with ripple iron to subsoil depth of about 0.3m. Not everything has thrived (surprisingly, the olive has proven the most temperamental), but sufficient of the

23 fruit trees have cooperated to engender a sense of excitement and anticipation at each visit.

Our house was designed by architect Paul Morgan, with whom the daughter of Nick (Bev's architect) and Linda Walters (parishioners at St Mary's at the time) was working. Our architect's brief to Paul was that we wanted a small, low maintenance home, sustainably designed, but beyond that we asked Paul to surprise and delight us! He spent many hours determining the best orientation of our house, conceiving a design which would blend into the bush and have a minimal footprint on the environment. The design would also reflect the local Indigenous ancient design of a bark "lean-to" shelter. The intricate and vibrant Indigenous artwork on our wall reminds us of our ancient first peoples, and the disrespect and maltreatment they have suffered since European settlement. This painting was by "Gilly" who was incarcerated in Broome, when he executed this painting, although we know nothing more of his circumstances.

As you can see from the attached photographs, the exterior aspect of the house almost blends into the surrounding bush, as the bush is also reflected in the glass. This aspect of the house faces west and the sloping roof allows maximal sunlight in the winter for light and warmth, and shade for most of the day in summer. The windows are all double glazed and the house is well insulated. Our architect achieved an impressive 6.5 energy rating for our house in the Ballarat region, for which we remain most thankful! The V-shaped verandah poles mirror the branching of the surrounding eucalypts, and are actually themselves made out of naturally fallen local trees, joined by "bifurcations", (eucalypt branching sites), which, although structurally extremely strong, are discarded and left to rot by commercial loggers. The trees felled to clear the house building site were also milled on site to provide lining boards for the living room walls, as shown in the interior photograph.

Since our purchase of land at Lal Lal, we have learnt to appreciate the immense variety of Indigenous plants in our area, and the flowering patterns with the changing of the seasons. In contrast, we also learnt how frequently eucalyptus trees drop branches (especially when stressed). Keeping warm, particularly overnight in the Ballarat region in winter, is critical. Our architect advised against solar panels as he considered that there were insufficient sunny days under our bush canopy to justify their installation, and furthermore, nowadays there are several wind farms in our region that feed into the local grid. Gas was not an option as we had no local gas supply, we considered gas bottles an explosion

hazard in a bushfire prone area, and furthermore gas is not a renewable source of energy. We opted to install a wood stove (photographed) to provide our heating. The stove also has an oven compartment for baking and is attached to a “wet back” which heats our hot water, so our winter electricity bills are minimal. We only burn fallen wood on our property, and if left where it fell it would become additional fuel for bushfires in summer. The carbon dioxide from our chimney is also taken up by all our trees which convert it to oxygen for us to breathe - carbon capturing by trees!

The other aspect of our house design was an optimal roof area to maximise rainwater capture to fill our water tanks (so we have a relatively large carport in continuity with the house). Water on our property is completely recycled, as our wastewater and sewerage is processed in our septic tank (you can see the edge of this in front of the house) and the treated water is then released through extensive tubing which gently waters the bushland below the house. We had considered having a dam built on our winter creek, but the Shire Council would not allow us to do so, and since seeing the film “The River Moorabool” recently, we now understand why. A number of shallow dams with a relatively large surface area have been built within the Moorabool catchment, resulting in large evaporative losses and preventing water which should have been allowed to flow into the river, from so doing. This, together with deforestation and water contamination, is having a devastating effect on the health of this vulnerable river and the wildlife that depends on it.

Our gardens have taught us a great deal and provided us with much pleasure, but above all what we have learnt is the fragility of this earth that our God has created. The natural world and that made by humankind are inextricably linked and dependent one on another. We need to understand the environments in which we live, to work proactively for their sustainability, to ensure that we give back what we take, and to learn to live harmoniously with all God’s creatures. The alternative is an Armageddon of global warming!



A Note on North Melbourne Before Us

John Rickard

As far as we know, the first European entry to Port Phillip did not occur until 1803: geographically its situation meant it was easily overlooked and more was known about Westernport, which was also more navigable. This expedition into the heartland of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation was led by Charles Grimes, Acting Surveyor-General of New South Wales. They had no encounters with the indigenous inhabitants but were aware of their presence, noting ‘two native huts’ on the ‘large river’ (yes, the Yarra!) and that rocks had been used to create a trap for fish. They were impressed by the abundance of swans, pelicans and ducks. Further up the river they climbed what we know as Batman’s Hill and saw the swamp on the other side with its rich bird life.

Almost fifty years later in 1852 when Melbourne was experiencing the first effects of the gold rush, the area we know as North Melbourne, still relatively unspoilt, was opened for hasty settlement to help house the newcomers. John Mattingly, who arrived in Melbourne in October of that year with his family, was one of the first to rent a timber cottage in the new suburb. His son Albert recalled the ‘undulating land richly carpeted with grass and studded with noble redgum trees, which gave it a beautiful park-like appearance’.

The profusion of birdlife was also commented on: parrots and parakeets, white sulphur-crested cockatoos, kookaburras, honey-eaters and scarlet-breasted robins’ and down on the Salt Water Swamp, swans, pelicans and ducks. They were soon diminished in number as they became a food source for needy settlers. Albert made a passing reference to Aborigines camping in these ‘park-like lands’, unaware that they had helped create them with their firestick farming.

Aborigines were a notable presence in Melbourne’s early years. E.M. Curr recalled how they ‘wandered about in large numbers, half-naked, and armed with spears in the usual way ... to hear them cooeing and shouting to one another in shrill voices and strange tongues in the streets had a strange effect’: he referred to them as ‘these once free-born lord of the soil’. Scottish merchant William Westgarth, arriving in the colony in 1840, saw business opportunities. He was soon making himself at home, and one night, having dined with friends in the Merri Creek area, returned to the town by walking through the bush that we know as Royal Park. He came across an Aboriginal embankment and approached it with interest. Its inhabitants made him welcome and he was shown around the several wigwams (as he called them) and the communal fire.

This sense of peaceful co-existence was ultimately an illusion, and just as the settlers were harnessing the landscape to their needs, so too its indigenous peoples soon became dispensable.

[Sources include A.G.L. Shaw, *A History of the Port Phillip District: Victoria Before Separation*; James Grant and Geoffrey Serle, *The Melbourne Scene 1803-1956*; Heritage Victoria, *Assessment of Cultural Significance*, Royal Park; and my parish history, *An Assemblage of Decent Men and Women*.]



Point Hicks

Audrey Stratham

Some years ago I stayed with friends visiting from England in Croajingolong National Park, East Gippsland at Point Hicks lighthouse, an historic but surprisingly un-touristy site, which was plucked from the realms of obscurity in 1770 when an otherwise unremarkable sailor called Lt. Zachary Hicks aboard Captain Cook's vessel, sighted land. Botany Bay and the first settlement in Sydney are more commonly associated with the earliest points of western contact, which is why Point Hicks is so far off the beaten track and we found we'd been given the run of the place. When we arrived, we could hardly believe our great fortune in having the place to ourselves and extended our stay an extra night as we were so reluctant to leave.

Overlooking the ocean, the old, weather-beaten cottage that we stayed in was adjacent to the lighthouse and divided into two dwellings; ours consisted of three bedrooms, a dining-room, a kitchen and living-room, veranda and lawns, which drop down to rocks and a point of land jutting into the sea, where a weather-worn monument commemorating Hicks' moment of glory crumbles away gently in oceanic winds.

During our stay we clambered along the rocks and winding cliff-side paths that lead to sandy inlets, which were curiously strewn with the dead bodies of scores of large, dark birds. According to Brian, the part-time lighthouse keeper, fierce storms the previous week had caused the feathery massacre; the odd thing was that it was a single type of bird – not a seagull among them – which lay dotted about the beaches. Often, we would just sit at the bench on the back veranda of

the cottage, overlooking a vast blue ocean in which we spotted whales, pluming and flicking their tails, on their way to Antarctica.

One morning we left the cottage mid-morning for a hike to sandy dunes which one of my friends had stumbled across when passing through the area at Easter earlier in the year. We walked for about 3km and then began to execute forays up the steep incline above the main path, as the entrance to the dunes is not clearly marked, and we were guided



only by a map whose accuracy we weren't entirely convinced of (in the end, the map proved itself to be trustworthy and led us safely through a tricky path between impenetrable scrub directly to the beach, which was to become our favourite swimming spot).

Our first two forays up the steep embankment did not lead to the shortcut to the dunes, and found us stumbling about in bushes, loose sand and soil at an uncomfortable angle and height from the path below, while one of my friends scouted ahead. That experience did not inspire confidence in attempting to find the shortcut again, but as it shaved 3km off our expedition, intrepidity won the day, and we scrambled up again; we were rewarded for our efforts when we came to the overgrown but still visible path to the dunes. When we emerged from the bush and reached the start of white sand, we took off our shoes and continued barefoot. Pale expanses of dune undulating over 15 kilometres, marked with the delicate tracks of small creatures; ours were the only human footprints to be seen.

With the hot sun beating down on the desert-like plains, the landscape is desert-like, alien, stark, minimalist and vast. "What a fantastic setting for a festival", and "what a good location for an avant-garde film" were some inane thoughts that flitted across the brain, really a trivial response to the bizarre beauty of that desolate terrain.

We played Frisbee out there on the dunes in the wind for half an hour. Then we

went down steep sandy banks, we climbed up more of the same; spotting a high ridge with shade from a few lone trees, the view of the Great Southern Ocean separated from our spot on the rim of the dunes by dense bush was a tantalising, azure backdrop to our hour-long snack.

We walked due west and passed different kinds of sand; soft and difficult to wade across, hard, a dark rusty metallic crust; like Eskimos with their numerous words for snow, no doubt a native inhabitant of the place would have a range of terms for the word, ‘sand’. We headed for the sea, which was just over a stretch of bush, which required re-shoeing; to our relief we emerged from tangled bushes directly on to the beach. It was windy, but the sea was fairly calm with a chill tang in the air despite the hot sun and clear sky. To avoid the wind, we marched towards a part of the headland bounded by rocks, which could provide shelter for us to warm up and dry ourselves in the sun, if we mustered sufficient courage to plunge into the cold ocean.

“Plunged” would be an inaccurate description of the process whereby the four of us finally found ourselves fully immersed: “minced”, “cringed”, “yelped” and “spluttered” are closer to the truth. The cold, when it first swallows your calves up to the knees, is numbing and bruising in a way that can scarcely be borne. Then a wave rushes along and crashes on to your waist, torso, shoulders and the initial repetitive icy shocks become bearable, warmer and increasingly welcome.

The depth was hard to fathom because the dunes would unexpectedly curve down leaving one afloat and slightly alarmed; one of my friends swam quite far out to a little group of rocks and climbed up, a small silhouetted figure in the distance. I wished I was brave enough to swim up to the rocks from which the views of the beach, I imagined, would be worth the effort. But it looked too far away and instead I contented myself with floating gently, belly-upwards, on the almost pancake flat water.

Later that afternoon, the kitchen was a whirlwind of activity as we prepared a Mexican-style tortilla wrap with crumbled corn chips; this meal was easily portable and accompanied by red wine and flickering firelight from a beach bonfire, even gourmands would have been tricked into thinking it a finer form of menu than it really was. With less than an hour left until sunset we packed up blankets and provisions for a dinner al fresco. After our swim that afternoon, we’d collected some wood, which was perfect tinder being bone-dry; where we had dried ourselves off in the sun earlier in the day, we now built a bonfire, while

the sun dropped down to the horizon. It wasn't a spectacular sunset – unobtrusive, unassuming, the sun discreetly exited the sky, but it WAS a spectacular fire.

Looking back, it seems satisfyingly apt that one stop in my English friends' whistle-stop tour, years ago, of Australia should have been this place where Australia's history – which could have been so different if Hicks had been less diligent or cat-napping that afternoon in 1770 – began. Hicks' reputed chance discovery set in motion events that led to the displacement by the British of the original inhabitants of the land now bounded by the sovereignty of the Australian nation-state. If not for Hicks' keen-sightedness, Cook would have sailed on, oblivious to the eastern coast of the vast continent, which hitherto existed only in rumour and hearsay gleaned from the tales of Dutch sailors a century earlier. The rest, as they say, is history – or “histories” – of settlement, invasion, colonisation, genocide, as the English language crept methodically and disinterestedly throughout the land bringing empire, reason, convicts, and commerce to a world that had for so long been enchanted, represented in the stories of “the dream time”, inhabited by peoples who regarded themselves as stewards rather than conquerors of the country. What if those languages of guardianship and mystery, which have

for centuries past been shrunk and trivialized and silenced, were to be recovered, released from captivity, and began to address us now? Can we begin to imagine the contours of what a different world uttered forth into being by ancient, primordial voices might feel and look like? Alien, strange and unfamiliar but also initiatory of a new beginning, leading us into a new future. Will we hear them, I wonder? I hope we will listen.



I acknowledge the Bidjawal and Gunaikurnai peoples as the Traditional Owners of the land surrounding Point Hicks who called the point Tolywiarar, and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

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Some thoughts on our place in Creation

Susan Gribben

In 1995 Robert and I spent a few days in Damascus as guests of Patriarch Ignatius IV (Antiochian Orthodox) and while we were there, the ex-King of Greece, Constantine, came to lunch. As far as the Orthodox Church was concerned, he remained an anointed sovereign despite having been forced to flee his country in the sixties, so he was welcomed and entertained as such. During lunch one of his entourage asked the Patriarch the classic question “Your Holiness, what is Orthodoxy?” The Patriarch responded, as Jesus might have, “You tell me”. To which the man said “I was always taught that God became Man in order that Man might become God”. “Ah, yes” said the Patriarch, “But not another God!”

As the years have gone by, I have reflected often on this interchange, especially when I chance upon any representation of the central panel of the Sistine Chapel ceiling, pictured below.



Whatever may have been Michaelangelo's intention, what strikes me forcefully when I look at this panel is that the Creator and Adam are pictured as the same size with the power of God being transferred from an old man, well past his prime, his job of creation completed, to a young, strong, beautiful man, who will take over.

Of course, the Fall and expulsion from Eden follow, and the Last Judgment is dramatically depicted on the wall behind the Altar, but in modern times it is the image above which is so frequently reproduced. Humankind now seems to want to see itself not as another god, but as a replacement, and require all creation to serve it. And I wonder whether this view results from a too literal understanding of God having created us in God's image. I am in sore need of a better theological understanding of this idea so central to our faith but, for me, what is most important is God's desire to draw us into loving relationship with God, with each other and with all creation and I agree with those of other faiths who refuse to name God, let alone make a picture of God in our own image.



Climate change, the Covid 19 pandemic, the recent earthquake are all reminders that we are not in control of creation, that it is vast and ongoing, that we are currently out of control of ourselves and not in right relationship with God or creation.

During lockdown, I have been learning much from my garden with my grand-daughter aged 12, who has been suffering from acute anxiety and school refusing. She is living with us and slowly recovering. We have been studying aphids and woodlice as well as the wonderful Spring growth and flowers emerging daily. Did you know that aphids can live 30

days and produce up to 100 live babies in that time? And woodlice can live up to four years and produce as many as 24 babies three times a year, which they look after in a marsupial pouch? Both can get out of control very quickly, just like the Covid virus. And they are both marvellous works of creation, as we are. So, despite all the current doom and gloom, I am taking pleasure in my glorious wisteria, and living in faith and hope that enough humankind will repent and take up the challenge of climate change to ensure the beauty and resources of creation are preserved for all.

ooooo

Ibis

David Bryson

When like an archer's bow across the sky
a skein of birds drifts out into a winter's
closing day - a yielding mimicry -
or from nestling farms fledglings blur
into conscripted flight, trailing legs
beneath their wafting sails, their earnest leaders
tacking wind-change to guide and urge
them forward, forward, these reluctant learners;
so I am drawn beyond my natural home
to where the willing clouds amass and race,
and others spur me to embrace the sum
of life as given me by time and Grace;
I travel with collective strength, bequeathed
a place where arrows spent are gently sheathed.



Lindi Forde
Nestling Farms 2021
Acrylic on Paper
24 x 30 cms

Park Reflections

Andrea O'Donoghue

Early Morning:

My view when I collect the paper.

I practise The Pause

In touch with my sense of sight and hearing.

Look across the road, up and down.

Joggers. Dog walkers. Bike riders. A tram. Some cars.

Trees greet me with their shadows.

Rainbow lorikeets twitter.

Magpies waddle, warble. Look at me speculatively.

Late Afternoon:

I am over there. In that scene.

Doing Yoga in the sun.

Sharing the setting

At one with the dogs and their walkers and ball-throwers.

Trees' long shadows slant anew.

Look across the road. Over there

On the other side

Home.

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27.09.2021



The Five Kilometre Zone

Jen Langmead

During lockdown have you discovered more beauty in your 5km zone than you knew was there? I have.

Like most of Melbourne, one of my ways of managing Lockdown Lethargy has been to spend an hour plus everyday exploring the pathways, creeks, escarpments and parks in my 'zone'. I've been challenged in this enterprise by the "shared pathways"(once I was knocked right off my feet by a reckless bike rider) but persistence has had its rewards.

Because my walks are usually solitary it's been possible to set out each day with a conscious intention to notice what is there (not merely add to my step count). I've been encouraged by this poem of Mary Oliver's:

*It doesn't have to be
the blue iris, it could be
weeds in a vacant lot, or a few
small stones: just pay attention, then patch

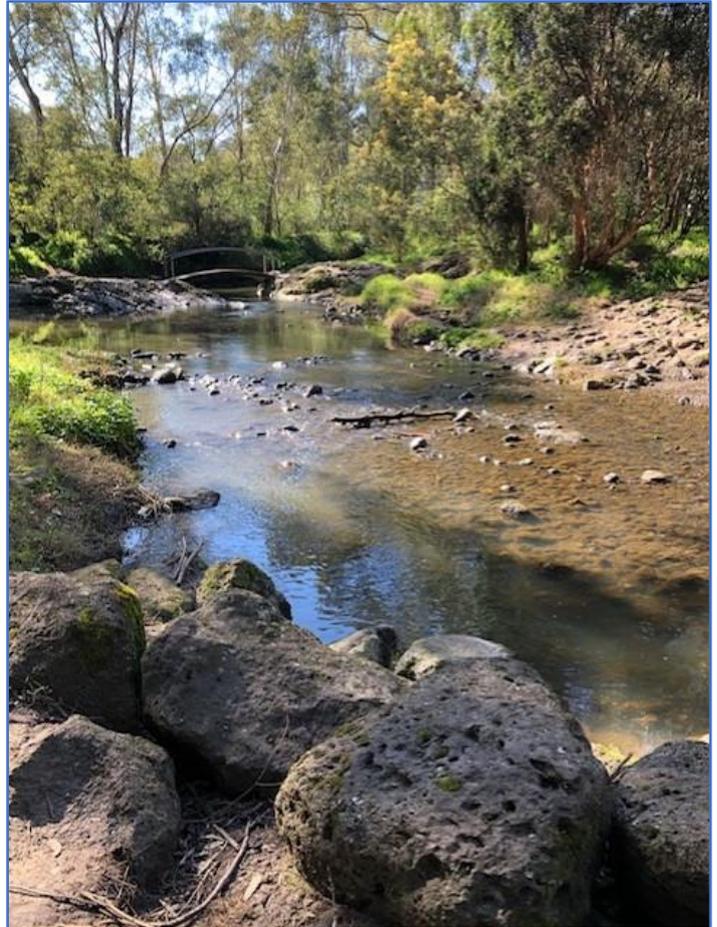
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.*



I reckon we have all needed ‘another voice’ to speak in this desolate time.

I have to admit that I’ve walked many of these paths before, and what has mostly captured my attention has been the creative gardens tended by neighbours. But over this time I’ve come to appreciate the huge gift of the scraggly remnant bush beside the Yarra, the wonderful river red gums, the bird life that is flourishing there, the sense of bush life along the Darebin Creek and even the weedy banks of the Merri Creek have been a blessing. I’ve also been moved to see how much revegetation and reclamation is happening, just in this little patch.



I’m thankful for whichever fore-fathers-and-mothers made sure that some tracts of land have been saved from development and preserved bits of our natural heritage here in the inner-city.

I’ve also discovered the wonderful work of groups like the Yarra Riverkeeper association and the Darebin Parklands association - both with extensive master plans and using volunteers to protect and plant.

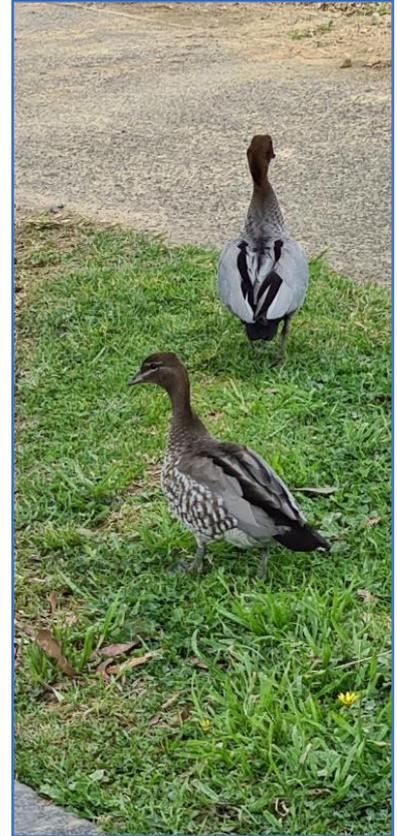
The richest discovery I’ve made is that my daily walk has become a “doorway into thanks” and has opened a portal into an encounter with Goodness that I didn’t anticipate when lockdown began.

All things bright and beautiful; All creatures great and small

Winsome Roberts

So we sang at Sunday School and for me, it was a heartfelt truism I witnessed and verified daily on our wheatlands farm: the tremble of light on the frosted grass, of a Winter morning; the warbled prancing of the sprightly willy-wagtail; the waving gum leaves on spindly stems; the smell of earth after the rain; the hazed gusts of dust storms; the blousy, billowing clouds storying the skies; the setting sun shadowing the paddocks; the sheep bleating their calls at eventide; the sparkled swirl of stars of a Summer night.

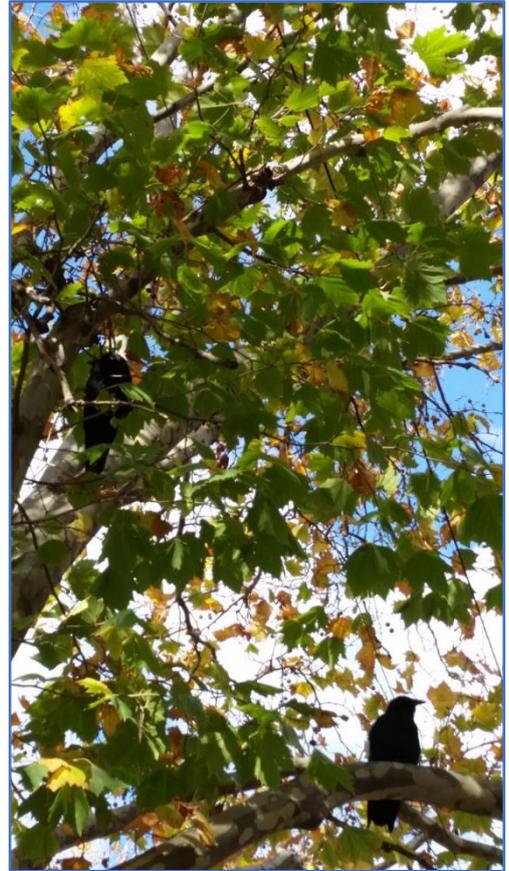
My days as a small child, were most often spent alone as the household grown-ups busied themselves with the ceaseless tasks of agriculture, husbandry, housekeeping and the daily and seasonal demands of life on the land. Going outdoors was my place of residence: my firmament. It was a wonderland: every small detail was explored and relished: drawing patterns in the sand with sticks, making cubbies in the bushes; visiting fairies that lived in the root-hollows and trunks of old gimlets; watching ants and spiders at work.



I had several special places that were sacred: two gimlets standing side by side - one brown-trunked, the other white- their upper branches forming an arched canopy; the sheepyard gate that swung on hinges when I commanded the secret word: “Open Sesame”; a rare, fully timbered corner of a paddock, down the road, that I christened ‘the Dingley Dell’; the cattle-grid that I dared to balance across. The trees, the clouds, were my friends. The earth was my bounty: I loved the shape of the little granite stones and I’d keep a watch out and gather the most beautiful one or two (or three) and bring them home, sweaty and dirty-palmed, to add to my cache of treasured jewels.

When I was not outside, I thought up and wrote fairy stories. I kept them hidden in a little wicker chest (that once stored my Grandma’s painting things) along with fairy books I made from dried leaves and flower petals.

Of course, those enchanted days were eventually left behind and I headed cityward for education and onwards to acquaintance with many book friends: Gerard Manley Hopkins' poems giving testimony that "the world is charged with the grandeur of God"; St Francis's Canticle: Brother Sun and Sister Moon, blessing kinship with all creatures and with wind, fire, water and Mother Earth; Max Ehrmann's "Desiderata" and the gentle counsel: "You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars"; St Patrick's Breast Plate with its faith that "I arise today Through the strength of heaven: Light of sun, Radiance of moon, Splendor of fire, Speed of lightning, Swiftmess of wind, Depth of sea, Stability of earth, Firmness of rock."; the Celtic Blessing's beautiful lines: "**Deep peace** of the running wave to you, Deep peace of the flowing air to you, Deep peace of the quiet earth to you, Deep peace of the shining stars to you, Deep peace of the Son of Peace to you."



Such anthems to Creativity and Creation have remained a continued and continuing source of solace and inspiration over the many following years: those of working and of bringing up my boys with the encircling conviviality of family, friends and communities.

And now the wheel has turned full circle. I have reclaimed a solitary existence. I am rediscovering the joys of being at one with all that I contemplate as a wander along the nature strips: surveying scurrying ants; circles of dandelions; the patterned bark of trees; fallen blossoms; the waft of yellowed balls of Wattle; the whirr of the wind; the cheeky chirping of parrots; the scud of clouds. All so utterly wonderful: the simple glory of being alive and at one with the world. What a miracle. What a blessing.

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A Small Corner for Birds

Michael Noble

*By the streams the birds of the air have their habitation;
they sing among the branches. (Psalm 104)*

Margaret and I were drawn into the world of birds some years ago, when the lounge room window of our then mid-rise apartment gave us a grandstand view into their daily lives. Watching the comings and goings, matching them up to the pictures in our quickly-acquired reference volume, assimilating their colours and character.

Pretty soon we knew all the locals. Some were there every day and others would turn up at different times during the week. Later on, new birds appeared – seasonal visitors to the nearby patch of urban forest – and our list grew. New horizons beckoned with visits to community parks, botanical gardens and other green spaces. New horizons with yet more species to be found and each one a happy discovery, with its own way of being and its own niche in the scheme of things.

After a while, our holiday times started to include intentional encounters with birds and it became clear that we were now birders, or birdwatchers, or birdos, as some say. We sought new encounters and in turn discovered new parts of Australia, new parts of the world. Wild, sometimes messy places with wild and competitive creatures. Not always conventionally beautiful places, but rather – as we discovered – life-sustaining places. Our view of what was an interesting destination to visit had changed and somehow our ‘normal’ human lives had become entangled with this interest in the lives of other living things, and birds in particular.

Entanglement and interest leads to care for the other. It became clear, it is clear, that not all is well in the natural world. In Australia, our native species are faced with the major challenges of extensive land-clearing and the introduction of feral species. Offshore, longline fishing and plastic waste are threatening life. Climate change is posing new challenges. Woodland birds are generally in decline, seabirds starve after ingesting plastics and drown after taking industrial fishing bait. Large animal populations have been wiped out in the recent season of wild

fire and coral reefs and kelp forests are dying off. It seems that many of the activities that contribute to our wealth and comfort are in turn slowly destroying much of the natural heritage of our island continent and our world.

What can we do? How do we find a right balance between human needs and the needs of the natural world?

Fairly early on in our journey with birds we joined an organisation - Birdlife Australia - and slowly learned more about birds and the challenges they face. We realised that the act of going birding and then recording our observations can make a contribution to conservation objectives. This led us to volunteer on projects monitoring threatened bird populations and measuring the long-term benefits of habitat renewal. Somehow along the way we had become citizen scientists.

More broadly, as with so many contemporary problems, “finding the balance” meant getting active, getting political, joining coalitions, sharing a message. Petitions, campaigns, writing letters, financial support, making submissions, turning up to (non-violent) demonstrations, joining up with others to communicate and agitate for positive change. Acting with others we saved an important local tree from the chop, preserved critical habitats for threatened species and held governments and corporations to account. Not everything went our way and some are a work-in-progress but we quietly found that small actions taken over a number of years can gradually add up, that joining up and joining in can be powerful.

There is one more thing. Places filled with natural things can be calming and uplifting. They repay contemplation. A home garden, a local park, a flourishing garden anywhere, a wild stream flowing through an upland forest, a bay shore, a mountain view. Our lives are busy, we have important things to do and we can easily get distracted. We naturally focus on ourselves and our human concerns. Giving attention to the natural world can take us outside of this, giving us a broader view of the nature of our Earth, re-placing us in the extravagant, priceless richness of God’s creation. This can be a great blessing.

That lounge room window view was a great blessing for us, a pebble in a pond, and we have much to be thankful for.



The created world in the book of Isaiah

Anne Sunderland

This semester I am enjoying a unit on the book of Isaiah as part of my Master of Theological Studies. The prophet frequently uses imagery from the natural world to describe the experiences of the people of Israel with hope and promise associated with fruitful vines and flowing water and desolation portrayed as a withered plant or a time of drought.

Animal imagery is also used throughout with domestic creatures, (oxen, donkeys, sheep, lambs, camels and goats), wild beasts, (wolf, lions, jackals, hyenas, bats, gazelles, bears and wildcats), reptiles, (snakes, adders and serpents), birds, (nestlings, owls and buzzards), insects, (bees, flies and locusts) and more exotic fauna (moles, ostriches, hedgehogs and “goat-demons” - whatever they might be!).

These creatures are used in the oracles as images familiar to every day experience, often to portray extraordinary circumstances, and we find that “riders on donkeys, riders on camels” describe the approaching enemy (21:7), “calves graze” in the deserted city as it becomes like a wilderness (27:10) and the forsaken palace will be “the joy of wild asses” and provide “a pasture for flocks” (32:14), “the animals of the earth” will feed on the prematurely harvested crops (18:6) and “a young cow and two sheep” will provide abundant milk to a remnant of people (7:21-22).



More poetically their characteristics are used to emphasise human behaviour and we find that Israel’s enemies roar “like young lions” (5:29, 31:4), in rejoicing “the lame shall leap like a deer” (Isa 35:6) and even the “Lord of Hosts” is portrayed as “birds hovering overhead” as he protects Jerusalem (31:5).

Perhaps, however, the standout image of animals in Isaiah 1-39 is found in chapter 11 in the verses describing the hopeful restoration of the people under the “shoot” from the “stump of Jesse” (11:1). When the people have a righteous and faithful leader endowed with the spirit of the Lord then all will live in harmony and the enemies of the natural world will live and take rest with one another. In 11:6-9 the promise of peace is profound as predator (wolf, leopard, lion, bear and asp) and prey (lamb, kid, calf, cow, child), turn vegetarian (11:7) and have no fear of one another as the animal and human world are brought together as one.

I try to remember how the world of nature was overturned with the domestication of wild animals and wild grains and it is a huge responsibility to remember how privileged we are to enjoy such resources. Our family is blessed with a dog and two cats and I think of how “the wolf shall live with the lamb” as I enjoy the moments when they lie down together!



Animals in the New Testament

Mother Dorothy

In our Season of Creation we are looking at the crucial place creation has in our understanding of what it means to be disciples of Jesus. An important part of that is climate change and the way we are polluting the earth, the air and the waters. But equally important is the role and place of animals.

We tend to see animals from the perspective of a pyramid on which we human beings sit at the very top, far and beyond them in our capacity for reason, invention and relationship. After all, we are the ones made in the image of God, according to Genesis 1:27, not they, aren't we?

This view is seriously problematical not only from a zoological perspective but also a theological point of view. In the first creation account, we humans are created on the same day as the animals, indicating that we have a common origin and a common identity Gen 1:24-25. And, from a wider perspective, we could say that all created beings are made in the image of the Son, who is the source of

all creation (Jn 1:3; Heb 1:2).

The New Testament itself is replete with a wide variety of animals, both wild and domestic. They are real in their own right and Jesus makes it plain that God knows them intimately and cares for them. ‘Not a sparrow will fall to the ground unperceived by your Father’ (Matt 10:29).

Animals are part of daily life in the Gospels. They are used for clothing, for the production of food, and for transport. Ancient society was not vegetarian, and certainly not vegan, but meat was not often eaten; it was an occasional rather than everyday food for rare and special occasions such as Passover, except for the very wealthy. Fish was consumed more frequently, especially in Galilee where it was one of the main industries.

Domestic animals are to be cared for in the Gospels and looked after. Even one lost sheep is enough for the farmer to make every effort to find it (Lk 15:3-7). And the strict sabbath laws can be broken to rescue and trapped animal in distress (Matt 12:11). This care includes the need for rest from labour. Domestic animals share with human beings in the sabbath day when they are not required to work (Exod 20:10).

Non-domesticated animals are also included in the New Testament. They are created by God and cared for by God and can also be models for us. Birds do not labour or work but are fed by God: their dependence on God is something disciples are to imitate by trusting in the same divine providence (Matt 6:26).

Wild animals can be fearful and dangerous for human beings but they still share in the same inventive and providential activity of God. Mark’s Gospel has a remarkable picture of Jesus, following the Temptation narrative - which contains no actual temptations, unlike Matthew and Luke. At the end of the forty days of fasting, Jesus is surrounded on one side by ministering angels and on the other side by the wild beasts (Mk 1:13). It is a picture of cosmic peace where all created beings live harmoniously side-by-side, with Jesus, the Prince of peace, at their centre.

Animals are also present as symbols or representations of spiritual realities. Jesus in John’s Gospel and the Book of Revelation is depicted as a lamb, symbol of innocent suffering, vulnerable and slaughtered whose death takes away the world’s sin (Jn 1:29). In Revelation the Lamb is also a warrior because of his

triumph over evil and death (Rev 17:13-14).

In John, Jesus is also presented as a snake, echoing the story of the bronze serpent in the wilderness (3:14-15). His lifting up on the Cross parallels the raising of the serpent for the children of Israel (Num 21:8-9). Just as the bronze serpent was the antidote for those bitten by snakes, so Jesus's death is the antidote for those oppressed by sin and death.

The people of God are also depicted symbolically as a sheepfold: a flock of sheep who are dependent for their well being on the care of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-18) . Here again the sheep are models for the community of disciples in their trust and knowledge of the Shepherd.

Note also that, in John's Gospel, the incarnation connects not only to human beings but also to wider created beings. In the prologue of the Gospel we are told that the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14). Later in the Gospel, Jesus speaks of having authority over 'all flesh' (17:2), not all 'all human beings' as most translations have it. The incarnation signifies the connection of God to all living creatures who are embraced within the saving power and love of God revealed in Jesus.

These symbolic representations undercut the hierarchy that places animals beneath us on a ladder of power and significance. They demonstrate that God creates cares for and redeems all living creatures, and has given us responsibility for their flourishing, since we share a common destiny.

We need to make a major shift in our thinking and language to incorporate all aspects of creation within our understanding of our identity and God's salvation.

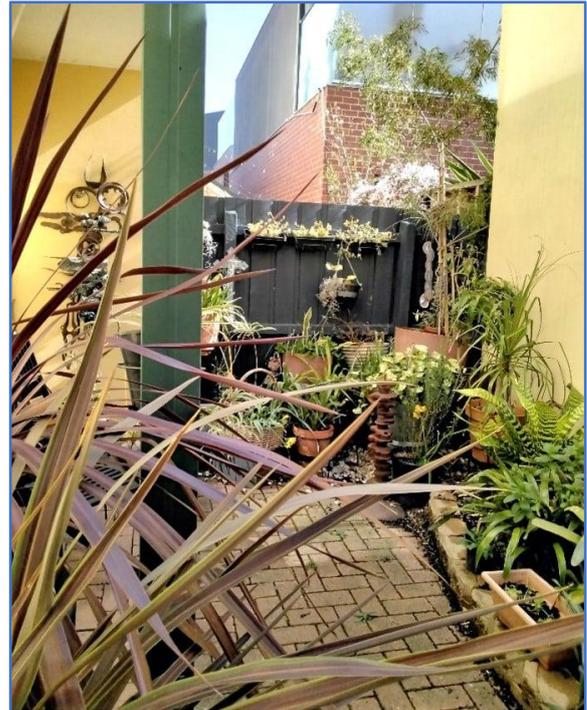


FROM OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: SEASON OF CREATION

Robyn Boyd

In this inner-city area, where many of us live with courtyard or balcony gardens, there's still room to bloom and grow! In my little enclave, cascading over a neighbouring fence is a fulsome, untamed jasmine.

In this springtime I now have a riot of the senses: the soft waftings of the fragrant pink jasmine, yellow daffodils and freesias, the rich burgundy and gold of tulips, purple hardenbergia, and the green and deep ruby stripes of cordylines. The bromeliads offer a variety of shades of green, some with flower spikes, others with a jaggedness of prickly edges to their leaves. There's the sweet scent of freesias, a cutting sharpness of Thai basil, and the satisfying aroma, and taste, of rosemary, mint, parsley, chives and thyme, together with the lemon and aniseed myrtles. Scattered in pots amongst the jumble are the promises (and slugs!) that accompany struggling seedlings of pansies and petunias, spinach and peas.



Tiny gardens can yield a harvest of delight, captivating all our senses, inviting us into a welcome participation in God's creation.



Season of Creation 2021 Prayer

Creator of All,

We are grateful that from your communion of love you created our planet to be a home for all. By your Holy Wisdom you made the Earth to bring forth a diversity of living beings that filled the soil, water and air. Each part of creation praises you in their being, and cares for one another from our place in the web of life.

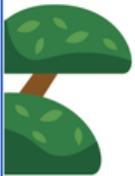
With the Psalmist, we sing your praise that in your house “even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young.” We remember that you call human beings to keep your garden in ways that honor the dignity of each creature and conserve their place in the abundance of life on Earth.

But we know that our will to power pushes the planet beyond her limits. Our consumption is out of harmony and rhythm with Earth’s capacity to heal herself. Habitats are left barren or lost. Species are lost and systems fail. Where reefs and burrows, mountaintops and ocean deeps once teemed with life and relationships, wet and dry deserts lie empty, as if uncreated. Human families are displaced by insecurity and conflict, migrating in search of peace. Animals flee fires, deforestation and famine, wandering in search of a new place to find a home to lay their young and live.

In this Season of Creation, we pray that the breath of your creative Word would move our hearts, as in the waters of our birth and baptism. Give us faith to follow Christ to our just place in the beloved community. Enlighten us with the grace to respond to your covenant and call to care for our common home. In our tilling and keeping, gladden our hearts to know that we participate with your Holy Spirit to renew the face of your Earth, and safeguard a home for all.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus Christ.

Amen.



Michael Noble and Dominic Sherony

"Tuesday 7th September was National Threatened Species Day in Australia and in this [#SeasonOfCreation](#) it seems doubly appropriate to reflect on Australia's threatened species. In a recent online Delta Study (5th Sep) at St Mary's we considered the endangered southern Black-throated Finch ('*Poephila cincta*') after listening to a sound clip of an interview from the ABC ([bit.ly/stmary-adanifinch](#)).

The clip outlines how the range of this species has contracted very significantly over the past 50-100 years, primarily due to the alteration of habitat for commercial cattle grazing, and is now essentially limited to just two relatively small areas. In one of these areas, a new threat to the finches' habitat has emerged in recent years from the proposed Bravis (formerly Adani) coalmine.

This prompts an important question: how do we properly balance the need for environmental protection and conservation of our natural world against the need for human flourishing? ⚖️

The decision of the Queensland government has been to approve Bravis/Adani's environmental impact plan for the coal development, ignoring the findings of the required independent scientific review, which found that the Bravis/Adani plan had major flaws and was "unacceptable".

Why have they done this? Presumably because the development value of the coal is considered to be more important than the environmental value of the area and the species within it.

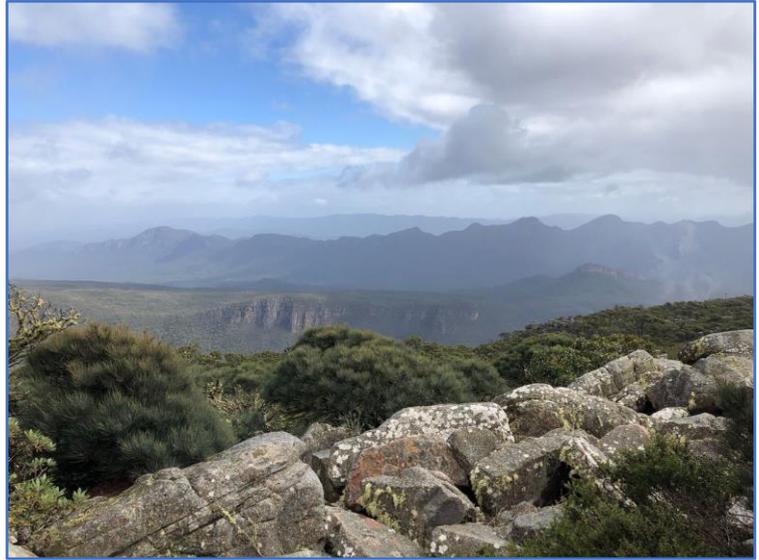
In a world where the UN's IPCC has unequivocally confirmed the damaging trajectory of climate change and the urgent need to reduce and eliminate the use of fossil fuels this would seem to be a short-sighted judgement."



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Elizabeth Brookes

“The Gariwerd – Grampians National Park is a very spiritual place, which my family has visited almost every year since I was three years old. This view, seen shortly before reaching the summit of Mt William, takes you back through time to the creation of the mountains and you can easily imagine the massive tectonic plates crashing together, reaching upwards to the heavens. The



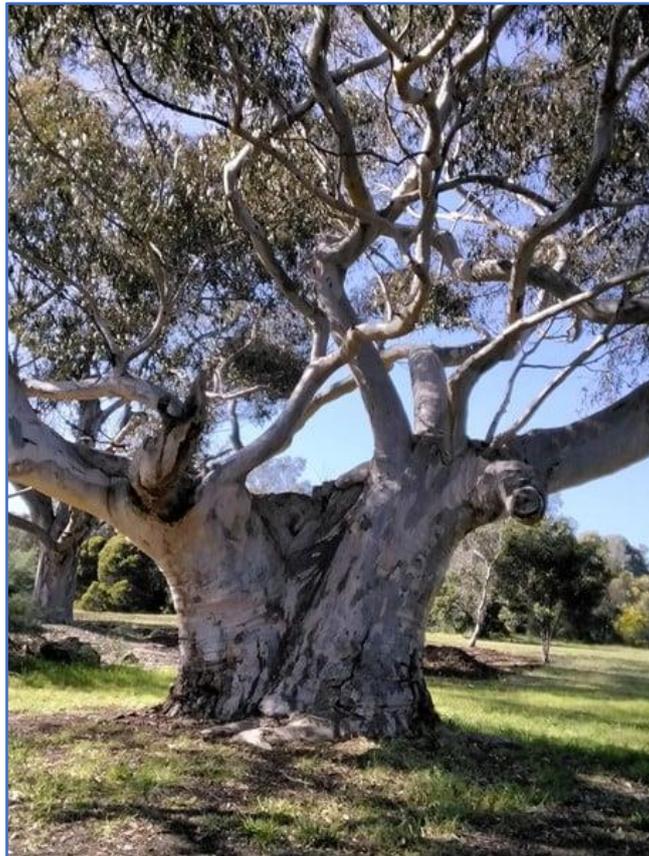
weather at any time of the year is capricious; on this particular walk, we experienced glorious clouds of many formations, swirling mist, fierce winds, rain and finally sunshine as a blessing. ‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.’ (Psalm 19 vs 1)”

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Robyn Boyd

This majestic eucalypt stands amongst other grand trees in Royal Park. I walk past it often, and it never fails impress its grandeur upon me. Trees call me into something majestic in life; roots that reach silently down to tap into the source of life, branches that stretch and grow high above, offering refuge to our feathered friends and possums. The trunks and limbs also bear scars from pruning, and signs of damage from past storms. Eventually, like us, their life ends. If you look carefully into this picture, you may find piles of compost behind - the residue of spent branches, the stuff that's discarded, not wanted, making compost to enhance the life of other plantings.

May our lives reflect the trees we love, giving pleasure and sanctuary, tapping deep into the source of life. And may the challenges and griefs from our lives be lovingly transformed into the compost that will enrich the lives of others.



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Bob

“A few years ago I was digging out the foliage from around my pool. I dug under some reed-like plants and was about to pull them up. As I was struggling with the roots some of the reeds parted and I found myself staring into the eye of a mother duck. I slowly removed the spade and backed away. A month or so later I heard a quack and looked out the window to see the mother duck with her ducklings swimming around in the pool. Their problem was they couldn't get out and were becoming distressed. The mother duck kept hopping onto the pavement and waiting. The ducklings went into a panic but they were too young to fly. After a few tries I managed to make a ramp. They swam past it a number of times until one went up and all the other ducklings followed. They waddled over the paving to a bush and disappeared under the fence never to come back. A friend reported seeing them waddling down the main street towards Swan Bay, where no doubt they would join all the other ducks. Since then, every six months or so we get another brood.”



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FROM OUR FACEBOOK PAGE: OUR PETS

On a non-Covid St Francis' Day, many of us bring our pets for a blessing. Although things are a little different this year, animals and pets continue to bring us joy and companionship during these challenging times.

Audrey

The little boy with the black face, socks and gloves, and the pale fur is Darcy (on the left), and the grey girl is Daphne (on the right). They're Tonkinese, which are bred originally from Burmese and Siamese. She's superior and phlegmatic, he's a bundle of mischief. But both are affectionate. And they sleep curled up together in the middle of my bed while I cling to the edges!

Each morning Darcy and Daphne remind me of their superiority by jumping onto high cupboards in the kitchen, or climbing up the fly wire on the windows or scratching their way up my clothes to reach the top of the wardrobe or leaping onto the shower rail while I'm having a shower. From these high vantage points they look down at me with friendly but amused contempt. Once again the pyramid with humans at the top collapses.



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Andrea S

This is my darling Tosca. She will be 12 in November, but still acts like a kitten! She is a very sweet, affectionate cat: we always have to have our morning cuddle. She is great company and always lifts my spirits when I'm feeling a bit down. I hope I continue to be blessed with her presence for many years to come!



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Angelica

Victor is a week short of being 4 months old. He came into our lives as a little piece of sunshine 2 months ago after waiting almost 8 months in a wait list. Victor is a very desired fur-baby and is growing so fast, teaching us every day how precious and delicate life is.

Victor is a very demanding ball of fluff and rightfully believes he is the prince and ruler of the house. Even if taking care of a puppy can be frustrating at times, Victor has filled our days with more exercise, smiles and doggy kisses – and the occasional teething bite



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Rebe

Introducing one of the youngest members of St Mary's community: three-month-old Apollo, the baby bearded dragon!



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Andrea S

This is Gizmo. He just turned five this week, and came to us around 18 months ago. His heartbroken owner had to find a new home for him, because her new partner is highly allergic to cats! Gizmo is a big, bouncy boy, full of fun and games and very affectionate. He likes to bonk heads with Mum, who finds this quite disconcerting!

We love all our cats. They are family, and have helped us stay sane through difficult times. I cannot imagine a home without a pet – it would not feel like 'home'.

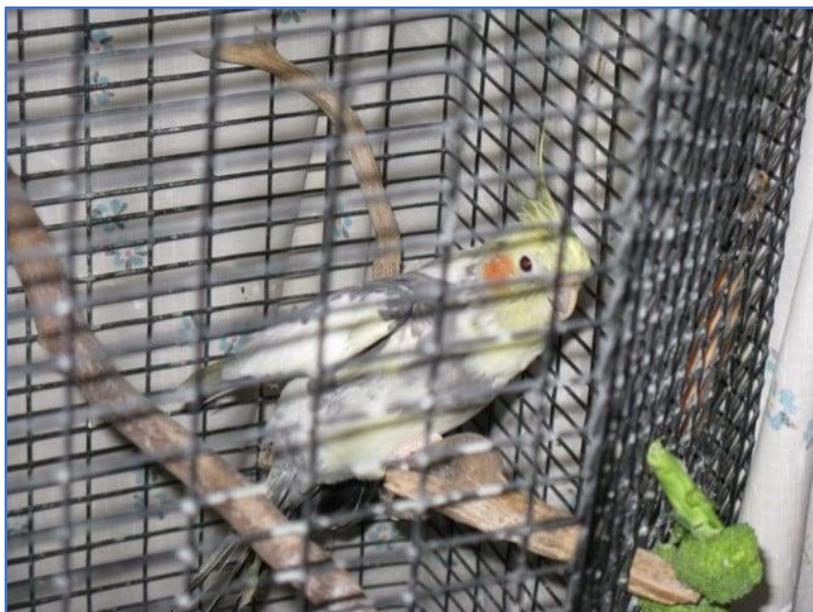


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Margaret and Michael

This is Pottie, the only official pet our family has had. We have been adopted by numerous neighbours' cats over the years. He/she, we never worked out which, was a gift for Cate, our daughter, in about 1997. He was supposed to be hand-reared but every time we let him out of the cage, he panicked and flew about frantically so we kept him in a very large indoor cage.

Over the years we taught him to whistle several tunes: the ABC news theme, Happy Birthday and the beginning of the 1812 Overture to name a few. As he aged, he became fixated on the 1812. He moved to Perth with us (that was so traumatic that he lost all his tail feathers and quite a few wing feathers but grew them back) and he had a remarkable ability to detect the arrival of our car before it pulled into the driveway although he was kept right at the back of the house. We would know the car had arrived as he would screech happily until the arrival came in and said hello. He gave us much joy and amusement and we were sad to have to leave him behind when we moved to Singapore. I didn't think he would have survived. Our lovely next door neighbour, Nick, adopted him and looked after him lovingly for a couple of years until one day in about 2011 he found him deceased. Pottie was such a small being but the companionship and laughs he provided through thick and thin was a gift.



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Andrea O'Donoghue

You are a beautiful boy, so pretty you are oftentimes thought to be female.

You are a Siberian Forest Cat with the loveliest nature.

You have a noble look and many Nom de Plumes: Prince Igor, Noble Rise Cat, Mr Fluffy Pants.

Your colouring – brown spotted tabby and white.

You have a white meringue around your mouth, chin and nose, white ballet shoes on your front feet, and little ankle boots on your hind legs.

Your tummy fur is gold and white curls. You have an impressive brush-tail possum tail.

You have long whiskers. Your ear whiskers are referred to as ear furnishings!

You are self-regulated. You know how to behave: You only sit on a couch or chair if there is a lap or a rug. You never jump on bench tops and tables.

When you ever so occasionally overstep the line and swipe or kick or bite you do Time Out!

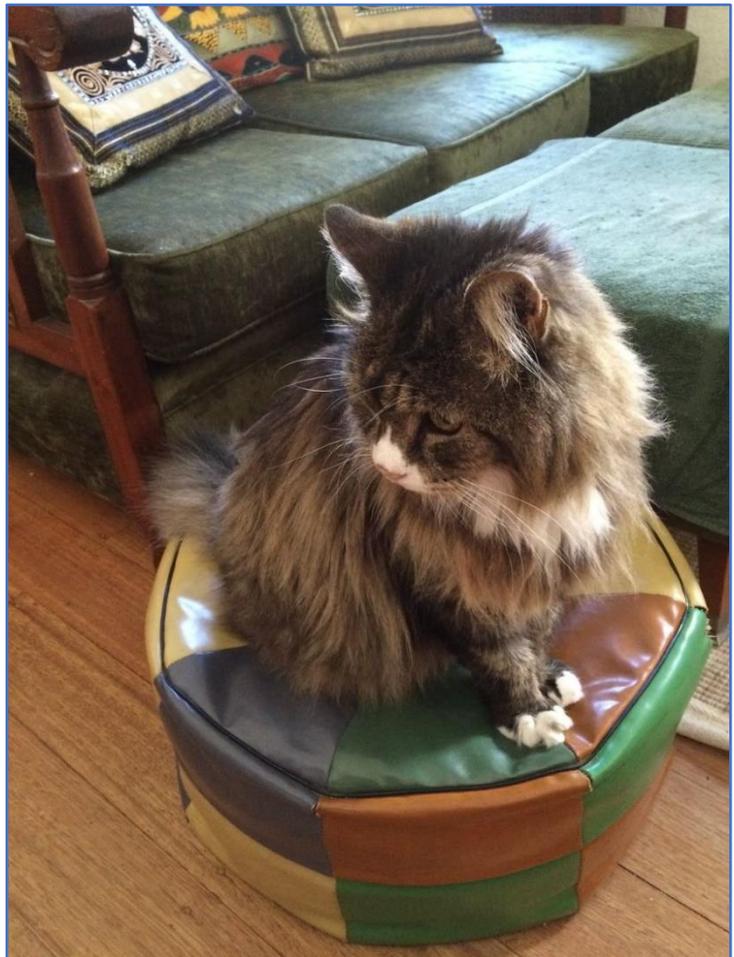
A minute shut in the bathroom and you emerge docile and repentant.

You are the Alpha Male who owns the block, defends it against marauders and takes care of the girls.

You love your family. You chose us. You've wrapped yourself around us and we'll never let you go!

Postscript:

Peter and I knew when to let him go. A lovely vet came to our home and Fluffy Pants had a beautiful peaceful passing on 5 December 2018.



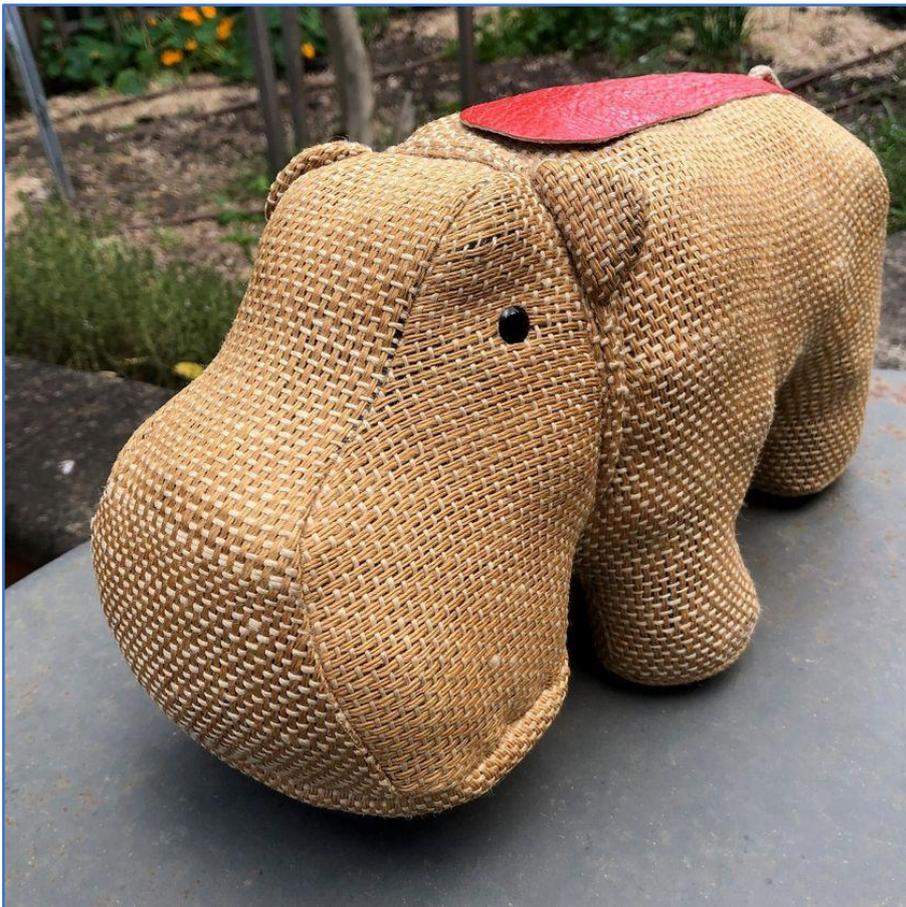
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Audrey

Augustine the Hippo was born in Nuremberg (circa 1971), the toy-making centre of Germany. Now living with two St Mary's parishioners, his hobbies include mud-rolling, horsing around in rivers, reading poetry (his favourite poem is 'The Hippopotamus by T. S. Eliot) and making occasional appearances at Sunday morning-tea Zooms.

Augustine's earthly aspiration is to swim in the River Nile while his spiritual aspiration is to join Eliot's beast in heaven:

*'I saw the 'potamus take wing
Ascending from the damp savannas,
And quiring angels round him sing
The praise of God, in loud hosannas.'*



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Robyn Boyd

Poppy is my lovely 7 year old ShiTzu /Maltese, who came into my life as a rescue dog nearly 2 years ago. She is a loving companion who faithfully takes me on walkies twice a day and enhances my life in numerous other ways. Her loves, besides neighbourhood and park walks, are animal TV shows, people, and "walkies in the motor car". We've just completed our training as a Lort Smith pet therapy pair, and once places are more freely open, we'll be assigned to a hospital ward for weekly visiting. She's done such a wonderful job of blessing my life, she'll be able to brighten the lives of others confined to hospital.



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John and Fiona Blanch

Our two Scotties, Mac, in the centre of the photo and Gracie, on the right, are two and a half years old and eleven years old respectively. They're pictured here at a Pet Resort where they're currently having a fine old time away from North Melbourne on a holiday mini-break!



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Sam

Many of our regular parishioners at St Mary's will know Meg as the dog with the tappy toes who's always happy to be at church, but to me she's a lot more than that.

Meg, now 7 years old, was adopted as a puppy and has been a loyal companion ever since. She's been a source of love and support during Melbourne's lockdowns and a fierce advocate for daily exercise.

North Melbourne has a surprising large number of parks and reserves, most of which I'd never have discovered without Meg, so it's on our daily walks that I get to spend that time in nature, appreciating God's creation all around us which is so often hidden in plain sight.



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Rebe

Sleepy Ruby is our 15-year-old Cavalier King Charles spaniel. Here she is engaged in her favourite lockdown pastime: snoozing!



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Michael G

Our cat, Mango, a cream Burmese, loves the piano in as much as it is a good spot for lying in the sun. Sad to say he does not play himself and, worse, deeply resents it if anyone else does, running out of the room in high dudgeon.

The second pic shows Mango in one of his calmer moods, with Coco, our chocolate Burmese, in a vision of the peaceable kingdom of Isaiah 11:1-9.



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Father Jan

Jasper came to live with me when he was 6 weeks old. I had just come out of hospital for a minor reoccurring heart problem, now fixed. I had been told by the doctor to walk every day but I don't like walking by myself so I thought a dog would be a perfect companion and reason to go out. I looked online and found his photo and immediately contacted his birth family. They said I could look at him that day, but I was not permitted to drive, so the seller brought him to my home. As soon as she walked in the door it was ❤️.

I tried to look objectively at him and check him all the time my slightly defective heart was saying yes, yes, yes! Jasper has a wonderful ministry of his own. He goes, when allowed, to visit his Aunty Margaret a ninety year old friend in Brighton. He just spends a few hours cuddling her on the sofa and brings her so much happiness. He is also wonderful when people come to the vicarage in distress or to plan a funeral, he is a real comforter. His birthday is Christmas Eve and I often wonder if he is a fluffy chocolate coloured angel.



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OUR SEASON OF CREATION SERMONS

Sermon for Season of Creation 1 **23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (05/09/21)**

Father Jan

Today, as many of you already know we begin a five week focus on the World Council of Churches recommended Season of Creation.

For us the Southern Hemisphere, this ties beautifully with the season of Spring, and already we see all the signs of Spring around us. For our sisters and brothers in the Northern Hemisphere, this season is Autumn, the time of harvest. When working in that hemisphere, which I did for over a decade, the first Sunday in October was always Harvest Thanksgiving. We will be concluding this season at the same time but with a celebration of St Francis.

I am always a person who likes to get to the fundamentals of everything, especially theological and so I cannot approach this season without beginning with the biggest and most fundamental question any of us can ask in relation to creation. Why Creation?

Why was the world recreated and how did it come about. Many of our brothers and sisters in faith would immediately turn to the scriptures to answer this question and then recite the story of creation as found in Chapter one of Genesis, and it is on that chapter I plan to focus today.

Well, I do believe that that is a good starting point, not from any historic narrative, but what it tells us about the Creator.

‘In the beginning, God created’. This is one of the most powerful statements to be found in the whole of the scriptures. It then goes on to say, and ‘God saw that it was good’. God loved what God had created.

Genesis then goes on to describe how the world was created, that the world was formless and dark and that water covered the surface of the earth and God sent God’s Spirit, described as a wind from God, to bring about creation. The creation

brought about light and separated the waters and created land. These were then populated with plants and animals of all kinds. Then finally God created humankind, male and female, God created them. God loved all that was created.

This first creation of story has so much that is powerful and beautiful about it. Some take this story to be history, others like myself see it as being the most wonderful epic myth, something that speaks about a greater truth. That truth being that the God we worship is a creator God.

But this wonderful passage also contains within it, the seeds of our own and possibly the worlds destruction and certainly has been responsible for the way in which western Christian/Judeo culture has been responsible for the destruction of so much of the earth.

In this passage we hear God telling Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply and subdue the earth and have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air and everything that has the breath of life.

Humanity, particularly western culture has done just that and the cost has been devastating and continues even now to destroy more and more of God's wonderful creation.

But God also gave us the ability to be able to change this situation. In this first chapter of Genesis, it records God creating humanity in God own image, according to our likeness. Well, what do we know of God's likeness? We only know that God is the creator and that is the key. We have creative abilities, like our Creator to change things for the better, to make the world a better place, to undo the damage that we have done. No we probably will never be able to bring back those creatures and plants that have become extinct but we can preserve what we have left.

On a personal level, this very first chapter of the Bible has been a great motivator and the rationale for much of my life.

It was in tackling the whole issue of creation and Creator that brought me back to faith after nearly two decades of rejecting the church. Asking that question, why Creation? And the further question that stems from it, why was I created? These questions challenged me to the core and made me think that I needed, even if it were only in some small way, to be connected to that force of creation, the very source of life itself because without that connection life had no meaning. It was a

big change for me, and I must admit that even in my darkest hours, when I have felt like walking away from the Church and organised religion completely, it is that fundamental relationship with the creator that holds me and gives impetus to my life.

Many ask me how I do so many things all the time, that I am always creating something. Well now you know. For me it is the connectedness with the Creator that inspires me each and everyday, it inspires me to make beautiful things, to use the wonderful food that God gives us, to make the world more beautiful, to fill it with flowers for others to enjoy. In many ways, its not really very much at all, but that is the gift I have. Others of you work in teaching, in medicine, in research in things that change people's lives, that is what it is all about, connecting with that life force, that creative power and using the gifts you have to create and change the world for the better.

And of course, the greatest example we see of that is in the life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life to set us free to be the people God created us to be.



Sermon for Season of Creation 2
24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (12/09/21)

Mother Dorothy

Jesus called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

This verse from our Gospel reading points to the way of the cross, as the way not only of Jesus himself but also of his disciples. It begins with Jesus' sudden revelation of his identity and destiny at Caesarea Philippi, a revelation that fills the disciples — especially Peter — with dismay. This is not the glorious, triumphant path he's been hoping for: not the way to victory for the kingdom of God. It seems the very opposite.

But, Mark tells us, for all that, the way of the cross, the way of suffering, is God's way: God's way, in Christ, of confronting and finally overthrowing the reign of sin and evil and death.

And according to Mark, the community of disciples (somewhat to their dismay) are called to follow Jesus on exactly that same cross-bearing journey to Jerusalem. It's a metaphor for how we, as church, are meant to live; how we as disciples are to conduct our lives. And that means a lot of confronting things about wealth and power and status on which our identity so often depends. Above all, it means living a life of self-denial: self-denial for the sake of others; self-denial in our individual lives and in our lives as a community, as church, as a society. That, Mark proclaims, is the way to life for all of us, even though it seems counter-intuitive and perhaps counter-productive. Paradoxically, it is in fact God's way, God's way to life and liberty.

In the last few days, the three most prominent leaders of the Christian Church across the globe have together issued a vitally important statement on climate change. The Ecumenical Patriarch, Bartolomaios is the leader of the Greek and Eastern Orthodox churches in the East, and he's accompanied in the West, by the Bishop of Rome, Francis, and by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin. They have worked together to produce this statement, entitled: 'A Joint Message for the Protection of Creation'.

And in this statement they point to the despoiling of creation and the urgent call to action in a time of terrifying climate change and also pandemic. They're concerned both about creation itself and also about the poor — that is to say, those who are least responsible for the state we're in in regard to creation, and those who at the same time suffer most as a consequence of the actions of rich nations and rich classes. For as they put it (and this also related to the coronavirus), 'no one is safe until everyone is safe'.

And so, during this Season of creation, they call on all of us to 'listen to the cry of the earth and of the people who are poor.' They call on us to take seriously our God-given stewardship of creation, to repent of our past abuse and greed and to find a new way of living together in creative, life-giving harmony with one another, with the environment, and with all living creatures.

What, you may ask, has all this to do with our Gospel reading and Jesus' revelation of the way of the cross?

It has everything to do with it. The 'Joint Message' is in many ways a call to 'evangelical self-denial' — that is, the self-denial that is called upon by the nature of the gospel itself.

We're called to deny ourselves of the kind of selfish gain and short-term wealth that has had such a devastating effect on our world. The statement calls us very solemnly to deny ourselves by changing direction since 'we have greedily consumed more of the earth's resources than the planet can endure.' For the sake of the future generation we need instead to 'choose to eat, travel, spend, invest and live differently' for the sake of others, for the sake of the young, for the sake of endangered creatures, for the sake of the earth. Denying ourselves so that all things might live and thrive.

We're also called to deny ourselves of the arrogance of our own isolation and to join with other Christians and other people of good will to work towards transformation in our life-style. We need 'to stop competing for resources and start collaborating.'

In doing so, we're following the challenge from the Epistle of James: we're living not just by airy-fairy kind of faith, but we're putting that faith into action. And by doing so we become friends of God, joining the company of God's friends, such as Abraham and Rahab. God's friends living out that divine love by embracing

others, especially the poor, and by embracing the earth itself.

Moreover, in following this path, the path of self-denial, the path of vibrant faith demonstrated by acts of love and care, we're following also the way of wisdom, wisdom as revealed in the Scriptures. In our first reading we have a beautiful description of Wisdom who dwells in intimate friendship with God and who *'reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other, and she orders all things well'*. In this vision Wisdom herself is source of creation and exercises God's providential care over all things. The same theme of God's ordering of creation is also found in our Psalm.

To befriend Wisdom is to embrace God and to embrace God is to befriend the creation that God has made and has declared 'good', as we saw last week.

Today the gospel and the church both call on us to repent, to change direction, to take seriously the challenge to self-denial for the sake of others: for all the poor ones of the earth.



Sermon for Season of Creation 3
25th Sunday in Ordinary Time (19/09/21)

Mother Robyn

Jesus' disciples were caught up in that age-old ambition. Who is the greatest?

And Jesus captures the moment: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

Jesus is continuing to bring home a hard reality of following him. It's a life of sacrifice, giving up desires and strivings to be great according to what the world applauds. Jesus' way is a way of life that starts within, anchoring self to Christ and the precepts of God. This is not an easy road – in fact, when Jesus engages with his disciples on issues of greatness and serving, he is on the way to Jerusalem, to sacrificial death. And the disciples don't want to enter into that coming reality.

And this way of Jesus is counter-cultural – then, as it is now. In a culture where greatness was measured in community standing, by your social connectedness, this is confronting. Jesus rubs it in by cradling a small child: "Whoever welcomes one of these little children as I do welcomes me, and far more than me—God who sent me."

Don't let's romanticise this! This is not fundamentally a warm and fuzzy "Jesus loves the little children". Children were down the bottom of the social pecking order. Yes, they were loved and cared for, but without the sort of rights and legal status we know today.

In this, and in the broader context of Mark's gospel, we can also hear this as Jesus saying: take note of who are the little ones amongst us; the ones whom our society doesn't want to acknowledge, or even see. Even more – receive them, welcome them.

Perhaps a little shiver of disquiet ran down the disciple's spines; a little shaking of their hopes of greatness in their world. *He's also welcomed gentiles and outsiders; he doesn't include them in this, too, does he?*

Of course, this is Jesus' very message. He's aligning himself with the most

vulnerable, with the least, the nobodies; non-persons. Those without a voice, not seen or heard, those most sidelined and potentially most exposed to exploitation. Jesus is re-ordering how they – us – are to live in the world.

Certainly counter-cultural. Perhaps even more so now, in our individual, me-first world. In our Western culture, we have been conditioned to see the world around us, and its people – as objects to be used, and misused, to make our lives more comfortable, or to scramble to the top of our little piles. Pushed into the margins have been values such as humility, gratitude, sacrifice, servanthood.

We fill our lives with stuff we *want*, and claim that we *need* it, or that we're entitled to it: "*I deserve this.*"

Socially and politically we're driven by economic ideologies, profit motives, wealth accumulation, which deem the environment something to be exploited for our own benefit. Most often for the benefit of large corporations.

Where Jesus' words to us are radical, is in his call to let go of striving for greatness in the world's terms, and to be *servants of all*. Naturally, and it works linguistically and in context, we hear this as being servants of *all people*, even though the Greek work for *all* is simply that: **all. All that is. People is inferred.**

We could confine Jesus' words entirely to our relationship with humanity - and most definitely we're called into works of justice, of aiding in the protection and care of the vulnerable, the nobodies in our society, to work alongside the voiceless and invisible in their advocacies.

But let's go further. As we consider this Season of Creation, let's hear some echoes from Genesis, from the creation story itself. Echoes that can shift how we hear Jesus' command to serve.

For this, we need to take off our old spectacles - the centuries old set that has us reading the Scriptures in a **human-centric** way. Our new perspective sets Scripture against the broader backdrop of God's creation of all that is.

For so long, we've read and heard the Scriptures as essentially the story of the relationship between humankind and God; the story of God in Christ rescuing humankind from the darkness of fallen humanity; from the ways in which we've made life – and God - as we want these to be.

Now, within an ecological biblical framework, new understanding is dawning that

salvation might be much broader; that it includes and points us to the restoring of a right relationship between God and all God's creation. A relationship that is about the inter-relationship and inter dependence of all creation. This relationship is grounded in every part of creation declared by God as good, each valued in its own right. Humans are but one part of creation, albeit a critical part. God gives a special mandate to humankind: to be servant of all; something which both accounts of creation, in Genesis 1 and 2, tell us.

The first creation story of Genesis 1 tells us that God told humankind to *subdue* and have *dominion* over the earth and all living creatures. At times our exploitation of the earth has been justified by taking dominion as meaning domination; and as being the greatest in respect of all other living creatures and nature itself. But the Hebrew word for "dominion" does not mean domination or exploitation. Rather, it means to "take responsibility for" and "to protect".

Neither should we read it as stewardship: stewardship implies an absent God with human managers over creation, rather than an ever-present, ever-active God, in covenant relationship with creation. Humans are participants, not managers, together with an ever-present God, partnered with non-human creation.

Then we read in the second creation story, in Gen 2:15 – that: "The Lord God took the human and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and to keep it."

The words for "till" and "keep" are better translated as "serve and "preserve." Humans are to serve the land, not despoil or exploit it. Instead of being in a hierarchical position "over" Earth, we are placed in a position of service to it. We are to preserve creatures and plants and the land so that all survive and thrive.

Jesus echoes this creation charge. In his challenging of us to be servants of all, we are called into that God-given ecological warrant: serving all. Caring for all creation is to be exercised not to serve our own wants and desires but to serve the best interests and well-being of all Earth.

In stepping outside our human-centred construction of Scripture, we can look further than salvation being just about humankind. Jesus' life, death, resurrection and the gift of the holy Spirit is not just about human redemption, but about God's purpose to restore all creation, to a community of all creation in harmony all with each other.

What does this serving of all that is, mean for us in the here and now?

There are many challenges and many invitations.

We can start with what Pope Francis calls an “ecological conversion”. Our world’s ecological crisis is a religious or spiritual crisis, not just a social issue.

We have a choice - to be like that tree in Psalm 1 – with our roots deep into the life-nourishing waters of the life and wisdoms and ‘laws’ of God-in-Christ. Or – the other choice - to sit outside of that life, going our own way, serving ourselves and following our own wisdom.

Like that somewhat rather scary very capable woman in Proverbs, “ensure everyone and everything can flourish: family, the poor, the land, the economy”.

Following words from the reading from James, our challenge is to seek and hold the wisdom that “comes from heaven”, putting away our self-centred desires, covetousness Personally and collectively, we can use humankind’s unique gift of speech for good. We can speak up for, influence, lobby, educate and inform.

Pragmatically, we need to support laws and policies and systems that promote the health of the environment.

We can simply love and value and delight in life.

The good news: God is ever-present, ever active and creative. We are not alone.



Sermon for Season of Creation 4
26th Sunday in Ordinary Time (26/09/21)

Father Mark

Are we saved by faith, or by works? Do we side with St. Augustine against the English monk Pelagius? Do we pit Paul against James? Do we trust in the sufficiency of Jesus alone, or do we rely also on our own God-given capacities?

For much of the Church's life over these nearly 2000 years, Christians have wrestled with these questions. And, more often than not, the conclusion has been that we are confronted here with a strict Either/Or; with a dichotomy that cannot be resolved. We can *either* rally to the side of Ss. Paul and Augustine, and after them Martin Luther – declaring unequivocally that we are saved only by God's grace, through a faith that is also only ours by the unmerited gift of God; *or*, we can cooperate with God, seeking salvation through our striving against sin, and our determination to do good. And of course, since the Reformations of the 16th century – in the Protestant world, at least – this dramatic, unequivocal, Either/Or has been freighted with ultimate significance: *only* grace will do, and all else is futility, vanity, and leads only to destruction.

If only the world were so simple. If only, indeed, *faith* were so simple.

The introduction to our service, that you will find on page 2 of today's Order, is right to note that each of the readings set for today speak, in their various ways, about salvation, and deliverance into freedom. But they each also complicate, problematize, that dichotomous Either/Or about which I have just spoken, and with which the Church has wrestled for so long.

Let me say at the outset, without qualification, that our salvation from the bondage of sin, and our reconciliation to God, is a completed work – done and dusted, as it were, by the death and resurrection of Jesus, who alone was and is able to effect that for us. We do not, and we cannot *earn* our deliverance from sin. But the life of discipleship; the life of faithfully embodying in ourselves that salvation with which, in Christ, we have been graced – *that* is a different matter altogether. And to that, each of our readings attest.

The book of Esther, from which our first reading comes, is famous for being one

of only two books in the Hebrew Bible not to mention God – the other, of course, being the Song of Solomon. And yet the midrashic traditions of the rabbis – those learned commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures, dating back to as far as the 2nd and 3rd centuries of our Common Era – are adamant: the heroically brave Esther brings rescue and freedom for her Jewish kinfolk, not by her own strength or ingenuity, but in obedience to, and with the help of, God. As one midrash records it, Esther’s prayer was none other than this: ‘O Lord, the God of Israel...help, please, your handmaiden... Save the flock of your pasture from these foes who have arisen against us.’ Knowing that her fate, and those of her Jewish kin, were not in her hands, but indeed in the Lord’s, Esther took courage in that knowledge – and then acted, and obeyed, even at great risk to her own life.

We see much the same dynamic at work in the Epistle of St. James. Calls to action – prayer, praise, the calling for elders, the confession of sins – all of them works of obedient service, done in response to God’s grace, and in the strength of God’s gift of faith. Grace, *then* action – but never grace *without* action.

And what of our Gospel reading? How often has this passage been interpreted as nothing other than a warning against temptation; an admonition to beware and flee those things that ensnare us. Whatever causes us to stumble – cut it off; radically excise from our lives all that does not make for purity. And of course, at one level – notwithstanding the harshness, the ruthlessness of the way he speaks here – that *is* what Jesus says. But dare I say it, it’s not the main point he is seeking to make. More particularly, Jesus’ admonitions are a reminder to us that we do not enter the Kingdom of God passively. We enter into God’s rest having worked, and struggled, and agonised; having made tough decisions, and then having acted upon them. As the Belgian Cardinal Joseph Cardijn put it, we are called to ‘See – Judge – Act’; to observe what is around us and in us; to assess, to *judge*, what we see, in the light of the gospel of love and freedom; and then to act – to put into radical action the decisions to which the gospel compels us.

That is what Esther did. That is what St. James enjoins us towards. And that is what Jesus, here in St. Mark’s account, commands us to do.

Responsible moral decision – and consequent obedient action – that arise, not in opposition to God’s grace, but as its very fruit.

What, then, does this mean for us in this Season of Creation that we have been observing these past few weeks?

Perhaps this: that as we observe the world around us – the chaos and social fragility that the COVID pandemic has laid bare; the worldwide ecological disaster that crouches, like a wolf, at the very door of our global future; the scourge of racial and religious animosity that is as present as our increasingly-consumerist culture, and fed, in part, by it – we are called not just to observe these things, but – in faithful discipleship, and as our response to the gospel of grace – we are called to *judge* them; to determine them as those ailments by which our world is made sick; and we are called to make those difficult decisions that are necessary to excise, like a hand, or foot, or eye, whatever there might be in our lives by which such global ills are perpetuated, and permitted to flourish.

- Where in our lives does our commitment to personal freedom come at the expense of the sick, and of those who care for them?
- Where in our lives does our pleasure in material wealth come at the expense of this planet’s fragile ecosystem?
- Where in our lives does our certainty in our own rightness come, like John in today’s Gospel reading, at the expense of those whose own rightness comes garbed in a different hue?

We are called to *see* those places; to *judge* them; and then to *act* decisively to root them out.

Don’t let anyone tell you that God’s grace in Jesus Christ is not sufficient to save us. It is, and it has. But nor should you let anyone tell you that ours is a passive faith; that our salvation in Christ requires nothing of us in return. On the contrary, our discipleship – as Dietrich Bonhoeffer reminded us so clearly – is a costly one. It requires us not only to believe – but having believed, to then see; to judge; to make hard and sometimes painful decisions; and then...to act. Not that we might thereby be saved from sin – but that we might – with God, and in the strength of the Holy Spirit – help heal the world from the ravages that sin has wrought upon it.

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The Anglican Diocese in conjunction with St Mary's Anglican Church North Melbourne does not tolerate abuse, harassment or other misconduct within our communities. If any person has concerns about behavior of a church worker, past or present. The Diocese of Melbourne is committed to doing all that is possible to ensure that abuse does not occur. All complaints of abuse are taken very seriously, and we do all we can to lessen harm. We offer respect, pastoral care and ongoing long-term support to anyone who makes a complaint. St Mary's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety is on our noticeboard and can be downloaded from our website www.stmarys.org.au.

PLEASE REPORT ABUSE CALL 1800 135 246

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENT

St Mary's Anglican Church, North Melbourne is an inner-city Christian community that strives to be faithful, inclusive and sacramental.

God inspires us to worship in daily celebration; to be caring, thoughtful and inviting.

In response to God's call, in the next three to five years we aim:

- To grow substantially in faith and numbers*
- To create an inter-generational culture that values all age groups - children and adults - equally*
- To express our faith in active engagement within and beyond our own community*
- To deploy our property and financial assets in strategic support of the ministry needs of the parish for the long term*
- To become more open to change as we learn to grow*



St. Francis of Assisi



Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen.

St. Francis of Assisi