



St Stephen's Uniting Church in the city

In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity



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EDITORIAL

When our Autumn 2020 issue of "Vision" was published, we could not have foreseen the significant changes in our lives which Covid-19 was about to impose on us all. Everyone who is part of the St Stephen's community has had to find different ways of worshipping, and we have all had to meet the challenges of enforced isolation. The pandemic has given rise to great suffering and anxiety in societies throughout the world. As we go to press, restrictions are being eased, and there are hopes that before too long, we can return to normality. But what will this new normality look like?

In this issue, we have asked members to present their own reflections on this period of "lockdown", and to talk about their particular experiences of living through this strange and troubling period. We look at how the Church in general, and St Stephen's in particular, have adapted to the constraints of this time of isolation – a time which has brought great pain to many people throughout the world. A significant sacrifice for Christians

was not being able to attend church on the two holiest days in the Christian calendar, Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Indeed it is now three months since we, the people of St Stephen's, have been able to gather together to worship in the sanctuary.

However, the good news is that our Minister, as well as our Lay Preacher and Elders within our church, have discovered innovative ways to keep us worshipping and connected with one another throughout these long weeks. Members and friends have been uplifted by the Sunday videos which the Rev Ken has put together – and which would represent hours of preparation and work. Alan Harper has been sending out

valuable worship resource materials faithfully each week to members of the Tuesday Congregation - and worshipping with some of them via Zoom - as well as to other people within and beyond the St Stephen's family who have requested them; again, a significant commitment of time and effort on Alan's part. Judith Barton, the Chairperson of our Church Council, has been assiduous in keeping in touch with as many members as possible through telephone calls and emails. Other people from St Stephen's have helped Judith by ringing different members of the church, to try to make sure that no one has felt isolated.

As restrictions are gradually being lifted, it is timely to ask ourselves whether or not "normal" life will be the same once all the constraints of the period of lockdown have been lifted. Some of the contributors to this issue consider what positive lessons might have been learned – and whether the Church too may well benefit significantly through learning to worship and experience fellowship in different ways.

One issue which Lauris and I faced when considering how we would order this current issue of our church magazine was the following: *How do we cope with putting together the next issue when we cannot "write up" special services and events within the life of our church?* We therefore came up with the idea of "taking a trip down memory lane" – and so we include some articles which offer memories of special groups and events in the past at St Stephen's. In particular, Lauris has written a comprehensive history of the Handcraft Group, which has been a valuable part of the life of our church since 1995.

Some members were supposed to visit our Narromine twin congregation while Alan and Lauris were in placement for 6 weeks in March/April, which of course was cancelled due to Covid-19. As part of the weekend activities, a trip to Viv Halbisch's saltbush nursery just out of town was included. Fortuitously, an article about her nursery appeared in *Ruminations*, the magazine of **Saltbush** which serves the scattered communities of the country. It and another article are reproduced here.



Finally, we include tributes to the long life of Arthur Lockley, and we celebrate all that he has meant to so many people through his acts of generosity and kindness. It is fitting that it is Arthur's wife, Ruth, who has written about Arthur's accomplishments and how his Christian faith and his acts of kindness towards others touched so many lives. At St Stephen's we have many happy memories of Arthur, and we acknowledge all that he contributed to the life of our church. We extend our sincere condolences to Ruth, to Arthur's children and grand-children – and to all who were a part of his large circle of friends.

FROM OUR MINISTER

Living on a road that borders Centennial Park, author Patrick White deeply appreciated the park. On a Monday morning early, I walk through the park with our son Eden and also breathe in its spaciousness. Near the Federation Pavilion, surrounded by larger trees, there is an open grassed area, popular for letting dogs off their leads. In the last four years, I have seen the landscape change. And change again, and then again.

The village set for Beatrix Potter's "Peter Rabbit" movie would be built, the film shot, and then dismantled. The Cumbria-inspired scene was then rebuilt in the parklands for the movie "#2". Again it is dismantled.

Embracing thought-through change, which respects the creation of God, oftentimes is manageable for me. Things, people, places change. Forcibly though, COVID-19 has mandated widespread change. It has had fallout that is harsh and unfair. This has been the sad experience for some of our church family, friends, and community.

We have moved into 'second halves of years' as many years as we have lived.

When we venture into the spring of 2020, the change for each of us will be different, and some people will be more damaged than others.

Family of Christ, step forward, not as conquerors, but following Christ in compassion, to show mercy, to heal, to feed - to nurture and protect the flame in each person's soul, and not to blow it out.



Tree in the *Peter Rabbit* area



The *Peter Rabbit* set

*Through all the changing scenes
of life,*

in trouble and in joy,

the praises of my God shall still

my heart and tongue employ.

Rev Ken Day



LEST WE FORGET

The Australian society which encountered the Covid-19 pandemic in February-March this year was pretty typical of most Western societies. Perhaps we have always been profoundly materialistic in our outlook; it is far too easy to imagine a past golden age that was free of the ills that beset us today. But whatever may have been the case in the past, there is no doubt that, as Australian society entered 2020, money and material wealth were one of the values which lay at the very core of who we were.

Of course, gross generalisations like that always have their exceptions, and those exceptions are probably disproportionately to be found within the Christian community. I do not wish to offend anyone by observing something which I believe to be generally true of the society in which we live.

And let me be clear at the outset: In what follows, I am not subscribing to the Australian malady we call “the tall poppy syndrome”. None of us should begrudge successful and hard-working innovators or entrepreneurs a generous reward for their work. Many of them are the employers of a great many Australians, and contributors to our nation through the taxes they and their businesses pay. We should celebrate and encourage that, certainly not take aim at them as “tall poppies”.

However, as a nation, we have largely followed a template wrought in America, which has delivered enormous wealth to a small segment of the community, who are often distinguished more by the profession they have chosen and the places they work, than by any particularly meritorious distinction.

For example (just one of many), it always amused me that one of Australia’s leading investment banks was referred to as “the millionaires’ factory”. Why was that funny? Because those whom the bank propelled to millionaire status were not the investors who entrust-

ed their money to the bank, but those who worked for the bank, manipulating other people’s money! It reminds me of the experience that led me to establish my own self-managed superannuation fund – that every time my money crossed a superannuation manager’s desk, he/she grabbed some of it on the way past, irrespective of how the fund they were managing had been performing. I could win or lose, but they always won. The “financial industry” – the creation of which was a proud boast of Paul Keating – has, in fact, arguably become a licence to print money for some of those who choose it as a profession.

I do not mean to single out a particular industry, but simply to use it as an example. Across a number of industries, we have become inured to hearing of the seven and eight figure salaries commanded by CEOs in some high profile firms. And we are all aware of people across a range of endeavours who earn a great deal of money, not because of any exceptional quality they bring to their role, but because of choices they have made and where they find themselves.

At the same time, as a nation, we continue to face something of a brain drain. For instance, Australia has produced some of the world’s finest scientists, but they struggle to achieve positions here which reward them financially for their research and achievements. A great many Australian scientists work overseas, where the rewards are greater. The same is true of other professions, whose members are as intelligent, hard-working and innovative as those in the richly rewarded areas, but whose career choice does not command the same rewards.

All that is about disparity of income and reward, but sadly, our society attaches a great deal of status to income. People are so often valued because of what they earn and what they have. We sit up and pay attention when a hugely remunerated CEO, or a mining magnate, or a media mogul, chooses to pontificate about an issue facing us; while we pay far less attention to others who may be far more qualified than they to advise us. Any climate scientist would attest to that; their expert voices are ever being drowned out by those of others of higher profile, with no expertise in

climate, but often with significant financial interests in the status quo.

When I was teaching, many students talked to me about their career aspirations. Sadly, a great many were driven by the potential income and status which their choice may attract. I loved those who, instead, sought to follow their heart – into professions such as nursing, social work or teaching. They knew full well that they would never be rich, but instead chose to embrace a career from which they would derive satisfaction and fulfilment. One could only give thanks for them.

The fact is that nurses, social workers and teachers – and countless other occupations – carry neither a great income nor any particular social standing. As a former teacher, I can certainly attest to the frustration teachers feel, that many politicians, many parents, many media “personalities”, indeed, any number of other people, are quite certain that they know far more about education than teachers. I am sure that nurses, social workers and all the rest have their commensurate frustrations. It’s all about status. Your value is largely dictated by how much you earn, and what profile your profession carries in the community. The people who matter are those with the big incomes, the big houses and the big profile.

Well, at least that was how we began the year. Then Covid-19 came along. And suddenly our perceptions were turned on their head!

When we reflect on the last few months, who have proven to be the essential workers, the ones upon whom the whole community has depended? Who have been those who, with great courage, fronted up to their workplace, placing themselves at risk, for the sake of the community? It was not the usual titans of our society.

During the height of the lockdown, the one place we were permitted to go was our local supermarket. It was only open because of the workers there, who stacked shelves, staffed counters and checkouts, supervised social distancing and provided assistance. They could only provide us with the essentials we needed because of the truck drivers who kept the deliveries rolling, indeed in one period, working twenty-four hours a day to meet the demand. Our





farmers and vegetable growers, abattoir staff, bakers and others ensured that there was food to be delivered. Train, bus and tram drivers made it possible for many of these people to get to work. Teachers kept schools open for the children of essential workers.

And I am certainly not overlooking the health care workers – the nurses, doctors, orderlies, cooks, pharmacists and any number of others who fronted up, at great risk to themselves, even facing protective equipment shortages, to provide the care that saw most cases of the disease in Australia recover. Figures of the impact on health care workers in other, worse affected, nations than Australia reveal just what a huge risk these people took. They did not *have* to do it.

Close to the bottom of the societal pecking order are cleaners. But the pandemic showed us just how essential they are. Every premise which remained open employed additional cleaning staff to sanitise surfaces and ensure the safety of those who used the location. Cleaners too proved to be absolutely essential to our society's well-being.

When our Editor invited us to reflect on what good things might have come out of the pandemic, I wanted to say that I hope we do not quickly forget who proved essential to our health and security during the danger. I hope that, as a society, we might emerge with a different attitude about who really matters. I hope that, when we divide up the national "cake", we reward those who currently earn comparatively – sometimes very – little with incomes that reflect their true worth; and that we afford a tad less esteem to those who might currently be very well-remunerated, but whose worth in a time of crisis did not prove to be commensurate with their income and status.

At such times, I find myself recalling the wisdom of the apostle Paul. In I Corinthians 12, he reminds his hearers that there are many gifts of the Spirit, and every one of them is given for the common good. He compares the Church to the human body, made up of feet and hands, eyes and ears, and so forth. "There are many parts, but one body."

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

It's a wonderful analogy for the Church, reminding us that *everybody* is important, irrespective of what their role is. And the Church is a microcosm of society. The same lesson is true. If the pandemic has taught us anything, I hope and pray that it is that the values that have driven wealth and status in Australian society are frankly perverse, unfair and demeaning of far too many people; and that only when we acknowledge the worth of every member of our community and the role they play can we lay claim to being a truly civil society.

Alan Harper OAM

STAYING IN TOUCH



PENTECOST SUNDAY WORSHIP RESOURCES 2020



St Stephen's Uniting Church in the city
Founded in 1842 in the Presbyterian tradition,
now a congregation of the Uniting Church in Australia.
Built upon the one Lord Jesus Christ.
Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey,
you are welcome here.

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, traditional custodians of this land under God. We commit ourselves again to working for reconciliation in this land.



ON THE WAY TO ST AGNES FOUNTAIN: with Ken

This week's format for the worship resources.
If you click on the link below, that will take you to all the resources in one link.
Thanks for the feedback.
Any other ideas?
Also send in your questions and comments on the topic. Email Ken at ken@ststephens.org.au

"PENTECOST SUNDAY" WORSHIP VIDEO: Click the white arrow in the red box below to commence this week's worship resources.



"PENTECOST SUNDAY" WORSHIP VIDEO: Click the white arrow in the red box above to commence this week's worship resources.

TITHES & OFFERINGS: Supporting the ministry and mission through St Stephen's Uniting.

Direct giving offerings are gratefully received. Thanks for your increased support, and here are the details for those wanting to commence giving their offering through direct deposit:
Set up a monthly/weekly/fortnightly transfer to the Direct Giving account:
BSB 634 634
Account number: 100029920
Account Name: St Stephen's Uniting Church Direct Giving
ABN 12 474 354 644

THE BIBLE READING

The Bible readings we focus on today
Acts 2:1-41

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Jude and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, "Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power."

Amen and may God bless to our hearts the reading from the holy word. To God's name be praise and glory.



**A TIME OF PRAYER:
Friday**
for refreshing of my faith, renewing Christ's church,
and healing for the world and the people thereof.

Apologies that Thursday prayer did not arrive.
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men, Gang aft agley.

"When they had entered the city, they went to the room upstairs where they were staying and were constantly devoting themselves to prayer, together with other women and men"

Let us in the church family of St Stephen spend time in prayer each day this week, praying in unity.
Each day the pattern of the time of prayer will change slightly, in themes, voices, and music.

To commence the time of prayer, click on the white arrow in the red box in the picture below. (Approx 6 minutes)



To commence the time of prayer, click on the white arrow in the red box in the picture below. (Approx 6 minutes)

DO YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST?
WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR REQUEST INCLUDED THIS WEEK?
INCLUDE AS MUCH OR AS LITTLE INFORMATION AS YOU CHOOSE.
OUR LOVING GOD KNOWS.
EMAIL IT TO prayer@ststephens.org.au



- Services via Youtube
- Social catch-ups
- Virtual Bible study
- Group get-togethers
- Bible readings for services
- Janice read in a café!
- Vision (autumn and winter editions)
- Prayer time
- Phone calls
- Visiting—where possible
- Letters





RESPONDING IN FAITH

If you had asked me at the start of the pandemic what I would miss about not gathering physically for church each week, I would have listed quite a few things. Primarily among them would have been singing praises together, sharing in communion and joining in fellowship following the service.

There is one thing I am close to certain that I would *not* have included on that list: responsive Psalms. I have nothing against a responsive Psalm, but it is not an element of the liturgy with which I have ever felt a particular resonance. Depending in some part upon how practised the congregation is, I have found that it can either sound syncopated and awkward, or take on an almost robotic hum.

And yet, here we are in June, almost 3 months since we gathered in person, and I am thinking about how encouraging it will be to one day join in again with the voices of the faithful in speaking the words of the Psalms together. However in or out of time they are!

There is power in this simple act. We are not just reading words from a screen but we are witnessing to the promises of God that have not changed in the thousands of years since they were recorded. We are speaking ancient words of praise to our King and we are declaring again that we will put our trust in the Lord – when we feel Him near and when He seems far away; when the sun is shining and when the storms rise; when we are surrounded by blessing and when we are suffocated by sorrow.

In times of difficulty and uncertainty and sadness and pain, God calls us to bring our fears before Him, to lean on Him and to pray in faith to Him. There are a lot of things I am worried about. And just as many things that I should lay at the feet of Jesus.

What follows is partly a personal reflection, partly a responsive psalm (based on Psalm 31) and partly a 'prayer of the people'. Maybe we can say it together sometime.



Leader: Lord, I am worried.
I am worried for our world and its people.
I am worried for my friends, my family, my colleagues and my neighbours.

Congregation: But I trust in you, Lord. I say, "You are my God."

Together: We pray in faith that You will hold the earth in Your hands and wrap Your arms more tightly around us at this time.
We pray that where there is darkness Your love and grace will shine more brightly.
We pray that where there is pain and sickness, You will bring comfort and wholeness.

Leader: Lord, I am worried.
I am worried that your church will not rise to the challenge of a "new normal".
I am worried that for some it will be too hard to come back, too easy to stay away.

Congregation: But I trust in you, Lord. I say, "You are my God."

Together: We pray in faith that You will renew Your church, that You will raise up leaders for a new generation, that You would pour out our Your Spirit upon Your people again.
We pray that we would be faithful followers and would hear Your call afresh.
We pray that Your Kingdom come and Your will be done.

Leader: Lord, I am worried.
I am worried that I have not used this time as well as I could have.
I am worried that when this season has passed, I will not have changed, not have grown, that I will not have become more like You.

Congregation: But I trust in you, Lord. I say, "You are my God."

Together: We pray in faith that You will be speaking into our hearts, even now, transforming us and drawing us closer to You.
We pray that we will not make excuses, but will make disciples.
We pray that in each second of each minute of each hour of each day we would seek Your ways and not our own.

Leader: Praise be to the Lord, for He showed me the wonders of His love when I was in a city under siege.

Congregation: In my alarm I said, "I am cut off from your sight!"
Yet you heard my cry for mercy when I called to you for help.

Together: Be strong and take heart, all you who hope in the Lord.



LIVING IN GOD'S LOVE

"And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them." (1 John 4:16)

When thinking about how this period of "lockdown" has personally affected us, we've identified ways in which God's love sustains us and continues to enrich our lives.

We've found that with the enforced slower pace of life that we now have more time for:

Reflecting more deeply on God's Word

Each week we look forward to receiving the "Sunday Online Home Worship Resources", the "St Stephen's Weekly News Sheet" and the "Guided Prayer Resources" that are prepared by Ken and have become an essential part of our regular devotions. We are encouraged by Ken's messages that are always delivered with such passion and conviction. It is lovely to see members of the congregation participating in the Bible readings and prayers which helps us to still feel connected to our church family.

An unexpected positive is that we are able to use the "youtube" videos on Sunday mornings as part of family devotions. We find great joy worshipping together with Caroline's very elderly father who lives with us. He looks forward to this time as he has been unable to attend church for a number of years.

It is also in the current quieter times that we have more time to pray and meditate on God's love. We really treasure the peace and reassurance of God's presence in our lives.

Appreciating the many blessings that God gives us

God continues to bless us in so many ways:

We are in good health and Caroline remains safe while working in the local hospital.

Through the use of technology we are able to keep in easy contact with family and friends.

We have a warm, comfortable home where we live together as a loving family.

In May this year we celebrated our 40th Wedding Anniversary. We especially give thanks to God for our very happy marriage and the love in Christ that

we share. And... we still have our chocolates to collect when we are able to worship in St Stephen's church building again.



Connecting with our church family in different ways

While not being able to physically meet with others, it is marvellous that we have the opportunity to get to know people a lot more through the weekly Zoom social gatherings. We always look forward to chatting, sharing stories, having lots of laughs and never quite knowing where the conversations will go.

Along with others, we greatly appreciate Judith's phone calls as she checks on the welfare of many in the congregation - a true expression of God's love.

We also really enjoy receiving the "snail mail" newsletters with Ken's thoughtful messages (often showing his quirky sense of humour), news of our church family, puzzles and fun activities.

IN LOCKDOWN



cleanpng.com

Finding ways to have fun and enjoying the world around us

As having fun is an essential component of our well-being, we are enjoying simple pleasures at home including; cooking and baking, playing and listening to music, and watching old favourite sitcoms and movies.

We are finding more time to appreciate the beauty of God's world around. We are taking long walks and are noticing the increase in wildlife, especially in the bushland along the river. The cleaner air is fantastic!

During this "lockdown" period, we have been inspired to take up the challenge of creating displays and making craft items often suggested in the newsletters. Some of these can be seen in the accompanying photo collage.



Focusing on God's Love for His World

Even though our day to day lives have been affected by "lockdown", we know that God is in control of the world and that He is a God of love, compassion and peace. It is through His love that we are sustained and our prayer for a world in distress is expressed in the words of the following hymn.

"O God of Love"

Words by Randall T. Pittman (1882-1972)

Sung to the tune "Finlandia" (Be Still My Soul) by Jean Sibelius (1865-1957)

*O God of love, whose heart is ever yearning
that fixed on you our wayward thoughts may be,
now grant us grace to live as in your presence,
and help us all our erring ways to see.
May love subdue the ill in every nation,
and all to you as subjects bow the knee.*

*O Father God, moved ever by compassion
for children crushed by sorrows heavy load
be swift to aid the downcast and the cheerless,
lift up the fallen on life's thorny road.
Give calm and strength to overcome with
patience,
and safely bring them to your blest abode.*

*O God of peace, whose Son with our sins laden
died to secure from bondage our release,
help us to banish hate between the nations,
to live as neighbours, and make wars to cease.
Bring in the reign of friendship universal,
and in your mercy grant to us your peace.*

Graham and Caroline Penn

MY REFLECTIONS



I suppose I'd better get dressed.
 What will I wear today?
 Who cares!
 No-one will see me anyway!

My days are so busy, I have a plan
 And a list as long as my arm.
 I regularly change my activity
 And cross off the things I have done.
 But my soul sings out in alarm
 Where are my friends?
 Where is my voice?
 My singing has all but stopped.

I'm still not dressed!



I'm supposed to be out in the garden.
 It's part of my plan every morning at 8
 And it's 9 already
 And the chooks should be let out to scratch.

Yesterday I dressed
 In good jeans!
 And visited my daughter (for a cuppa)
 We sat in the garage (it was raining)
 With the door wide open and quilts over knees.
 It was my first outing in 10 weeks
 Such a joy to get in the car,
 To have a reason to dress, and to meet.

Significant times have been celebrated,

(a birthday, Easter, Anzac Day, Mother's Day)
 All in isolation!
 I'm well over 60 you see
 And considered vulnerable at least.
 Family came for picnics out back,
 Or with doors and windows between us.
 No cuddles or kisses from kids or grandkids
 And distances kept as dictated.

My life is so full and busy
 I haven't got time to be bored.
 How come I feel lonely and empty at times?
 Why should I crave anything at all?
 Why do the tears just flow?
 Why do I cry out to God for a hug?



Nothing more, I'm content, just a hug!
 He gives them to me! Ahh thank you.

Zoom and Duo, email, blogs, phones
 Are the tools I use to weave
 The threads that tie us together,
 Into a quilt that keeps my community
 From vanishing into thin air.

I've made lots of quilts!

I've added achievements to blogs
 And watched those of others too.
 With Netflix, YouTube and audio books
 I spend my evenings through.

Zoom live pilates with my instructor,
 Recorded Zoom church on Sunday,
 Zoom church morning tea on Wednesdays,
 Zoom patchwork group get togethers,
 Duo calls with children and grandchildren,
 All keep me together.

I've found some inspiring creations online
 Two poems that express
 The feelings I have about lockdown,
 To help me reflect and laugh.

I'm a glass half full kind of person
 And am happy to be given the time
 To do all those things I've needed to do.



I've sorted the garden, the chooks,
 The files, the photos, the fabric, the rooms.
 And created all sorts of things.

I've made lots of quilts!

I am grateful to those who are carers.
 I grieve for those who are sick or have died.
 I pray for those who have traumas to bear
 And are unable to find their peace.

But it's up to us to be happy or sad,
 To immerse ourselves in joy or grief,
 In the world we find ourselves
 To care, to mourn, then to laugh.
 This is not the way I planned it

But God has plans of his own.
 To use my God-given talents for good
 Is the only way I know.

So forward I go - to get dressed -
 Looking ever onward with joy
 To the days ahead,
 To the day I can sing again,
 To the hugs from my circle
 Of family and friends,
 And to a future wherever I'm needed
 That is happy and full of joy,
 Looking for the positive outcome
 In the terrors of the unknown.



They call this "The New Normal".
 We plan, look for new paths to take.
 Then make more plans,
 embrace our community,
 Recalibrate our goals.
 Until we come out the other end
 Stay safe, stay sane.

Written on 19 May 2020 after 10 weeks of Covid-19 Lockdown

Betty Jacobs

LIFE AT THE TIME OF 'LOCKDOWN' - AND

Ironically, I first learnt about the coronavirus when I was out with friends (the very antithesis of isolation). It was mid February, and the semester hadn't even started yet. Someone had told a terrible joke about beer and Lyme disease. At the time, I knew what Lyme disease was, at least. I'm just glad I didn't find the joke funny, because look where we are now.

Honestly, I think it was that same day when I came home to find my parents horrified at the state of Wuhan. There were terrible stories circulating about China's false statistics, about a little boy who had died because his parents were forcibly isolated, videos of authorities violently shoving people into vans and taking them away. I was equally horrified. I was also horrified at the protests in Hong Kong, American gun laws and global warming. But for the meantime,



these things weren't affecting me personally, so it was a mild, lukewarm horror that didn't truly touch me.

University started, and with it, an innumerable amount of commitments. I was studying linguistics and electroacoustic music for the first time, philosophising about my musical aesthetics and practising for my AMus in flute. I was too busy to think about the world and many of the people in it.

Then suddenly university was cancelled.

And the Con chamber choir went online.

I have to say, online choir has been almost more traumatic than the entirety of Sydney Uni going online. But the point remains the

same. Learning in isolation, especially something as community-based as music, is terribly lonely. And again, I watched from the comfort of home as South Korea, then Italy, then Europe, then the USA, then South America fell apart. But my own world was falling apart too, and so other than the daily checking of statistics, it didn't affect me. It didn't touch me.

If anything, the world outside my house became something of a reality TV show

(something like the American presidential campaign), providing escape from the stress of home education. *We were all in this together, right?* Everyone was suffering.

Everyone was suffering individually and alone, and

technology does nothing to break the distance, I found. Most of my classes weren't live and work was to be completed on my own, the activities proving to be tedious alone in an empty house. And the occasional class that was live, via Zoom? They were anxiety-inducing and tense, turning communication into a performance situation. If not for being able to turn my laptop microphone and camera off, classes would have been torture. And all of us



THE GRADUAL RETURN TO 'NORMALITY'

were experiencing the same thing, and all of us, alone.

And then, schools were closed. And so my parents, both teachers, were now at home with me, and my younger sister too. The house was too loud now! Cleaning and tidying and cooking increased exponentially. We hardly had enough rooms for all of us Zooming and teaching and learning. I was still trapped in the little bubble that was my house, but now my family was in there with me. It still didn't change the fact that I hadn't left the house for over a month.

work of mine, cancelled earlier this year. But two weeks ago we started trying out the online choir thing. Projects I'd given up and *grieved about* are now suddenly possible, if only I'd realised sooner the wonders of technology. I am getting used to this, and now I worry that I will struggle to deal with real life, when finally I have to face it. Not through a screen, but breathing the same air. My family have gone back to work again, the laws are lifting, socialising is allowed again! And all without having to exercise!

But I'm not leaving the house any more often.

I'm not thinking about it too much though. The tragic death of George Floyd and the protests of BLM have

taken centre stage: another thing to be horrified about, and again, watching the outside world through the media is my way of going outside now. Is this humanity? Somehow, lockdown has turned me into a voyeur, watching the world for entertainment and thrills without experiencing it for myself. Lockdown has made me something inhuman, it seems, but at least I've grown to realise it. The rush and buzz of those daily commutes so many months ago is alien to me, but it did mean I hardly watched the world at all. I



Fast forward to now, and life in isolation is second nature. Oh yes, the lockdown is lifting, and people are going to work again, but I won't be on my university campus until November at least. For me, it is still very much real. My cohort finally got its act together, and we began partying weekly. I promise, it's not as wild as it sounds. Zoom parties, we play online Pictionary and chat about being home all day. It's a little less lonely. Online exams are less stressful too, I've found, than being trapped in a room filled with hundreds of anxious students. Ad Lib, a composer's choir that was performing a

was trapped in my own little bubble of university life, of philosophizing about musical aesthetics and practising for my AMus in flute. I was too busy to care about the world.

Lockdown has caused my world to crash, and somehow, it didn't change anything.

But I am watching now, and I am waiting. Soon, I will rejoin the world, and hopefully, it won't just be entertainment anymore.

Courtney Cousins



HOPES FOR A DIFFERENT WORLD

here on this earth for only a short period of time, only then to face death?

My second hope, therefore, for a “new” world is that people in general might no longer put off seeking answers. Might Covid-19 and its attendant anxieties and sadness lead to people’s re-discovery of the importance of an “inner life” – the life of the soul?

Many people have commented on the fact that the period of enforced isolation has led to people’s being concerned about their neighbours – and especially their elderly neighbours.

There have been inspiring offers of assistance from younger, healthier members of our communities to come to the aid of the elderly, as well as those whom

Today is Sunday, the last day of May 2020 – and I have been in lockdown, more or less, since Sunday the 22nd March. Ten long weeks! And yet I know that I have nothing to complain of since I have not suffered greatly. The hardest part of this lockdown for me has been not being able to worship at St Stephen’s on Sunday mornings – and not being able to meet up face to face with friends over coffee or a meal together.

However, the reality is that many people all over the world have suffered a great deal, and continue to suffer as I write these words to-night. The first of my hopes which I want to give voice to this evening is that their suffering and that of their loved ones might not be forgotten. We should remember in particular the doctors and nurses who risked their lives – and in some cases, who lost their lives – in their selfless efforts to treat those struck down by Covid-19.

I want to reflect to-night on how the world we will awaken to, as we slowly come out of lockdown, may be very different from the one we knew at the start of this pandemic. Given all the suffering and given all the sacrifices which have been made, I hope that this “new” world will definitely be a better one.

I am not the first to comment on the fact that having extra time on our hands and not being so rushed has led many of us to reflect on the superficiality of our existence “before”. We have begun to realise that we have been beguiled by consumerism, and also by the delights of entertainment and the social media. We have also been led astray by the general busyness of everyday life, and genuinely believed that we were living life to the full. But we failed to notice that within, there was an emptiness and a lack of serenity and peace. Many people have responded by beginning to practise meditation, by doing some in-depth reading – and by asking themselves again the eternal questions: What is the purpose of life? Why are we put

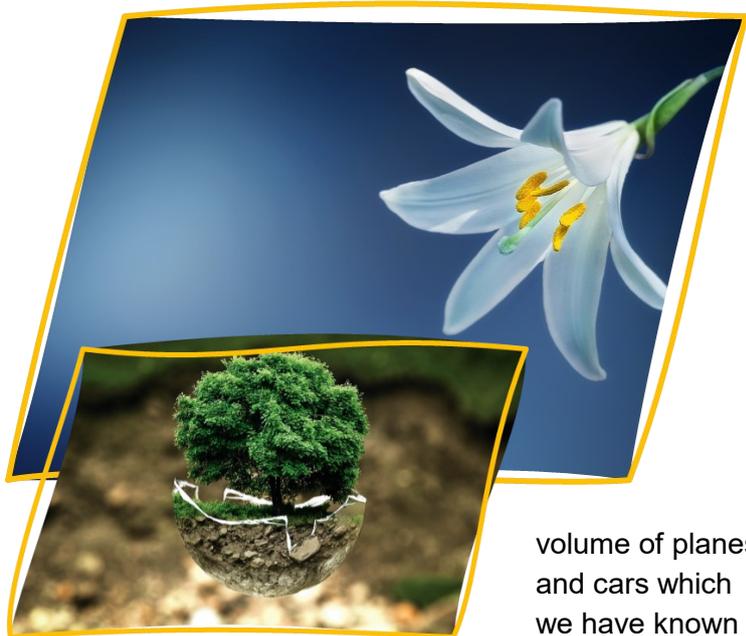


they know to be suffering from other illnesses. Charitable organisations have redoubled their efforts to assist the homeless and the vulnerable in our midst. We have all been affected by the sight on television of the long queues of the newly unemployed outside Centrelink offices. Our Government has responded by giving financial aid to different businesses and people in our communities, so that the most seriously affected have not been neglected.

My third hope is that this concern for our neighbours in need may not disappear with the return to a more normal existence. In this different and changed world, there will hopefully be greater care and more support provided for the marginalised and the vulnerable in our midst.

During this period when we have all been spending a lot more time at home, the centre of Sydney and the streets of our suburbs have been strangely quiet and peaceful. The skies have been free of the noise of jet planes taking off and landing, and this has been a welcome time of respite for all those whose homes are located near airports. In the mornings, the sounds of bird calls welcoming the start of a new day have brought joy and a sense of optimism. On these sunny autumn days, the sky has been a bright blue – no hint of smoke in the air or pollution from cars.

My final hope is that we might find better ways to care for our environment. I do not have any easy answers as to how society can function again without the



volume of planes and cars which we have known

in the past. I am not wise enough or learned enough to predict how much better our future might be through the development of alternative forms of energy. It will be difficult, however, to relinquish the memory of the bright blue skies and the peaceful streets which we have become accustomed to over the last ten weeks or so.

We are being given the good news at the moment that Australia is “flattening the curve”. As we slowly emerge from this time of confinement within our homes, I am sure that most people feel that we cannot go back to the world we knew before. Many have suffered because of Covid-19, and millions have lost their lives to this dreadful virus.

The question is now how can we each help shape a different, kinder world where materialism fades away, where the “inner life” of each individual is valued – and where we care for the wonders and the health of our planet?

Janice Dawson

Since the beginning of “lockdown”, the Rev Jenny Ducker, the Pastoral Relations Minister at Sydney Presbytery, has been sending out Pastoral Letters on a regular basis to members of Presbytery. Her insightful and thoughtful letters are a source of strength and comfort. The following letter, reproduced with permission, is relevant to the themes of this edition of Vision, particularly relating to the ‘ways we do church’. I hope you find it inspiring. Ed.

No Ordinary Season - A Pastoral Note from Jenny



posted by **JENNY DUCKER**
June 04, 2020

Dear friends,

“May today there be peace within. May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be. May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith. May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you. May you be content knowing you are a child of God. Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance, praise and love. It is there for each and every one of us.”

Saint Teresa of Ávila (16th Century)



I was in a meeting a while ago when one person (kudos to Mark) stated that we've been talking about change being needed in the church for years, but little if anything has changed. Then along comes this virus and suddenly we change things almost overnight. He lamented that for all those years of talk, we had been ignoring the Holy Spirit, yet we sit up and pay attention to a virus.

I can certainly appreciate his frustration! And on one level I am completely in agreement. However, I'm also prepared to embrace a more positive and (hopefully) faith-filled response.

The years - decades, even - of talking about change in the church have indeed led to great frustration. I have heard that expressed and felt it myself time and again over the last three months and longer. Those years, however, have led to an increased hunger and readiness for change. They have also added to the sense of urgency. We have known for a very long time that if nothing changes in the church, we will continue the trajectory we seem to be on of declining numbers and an ageing profile. We will continue to have little perceived relevance to younger generations, and to the broader community. Our major dilemma seems to have been that we simply don't know what the change needs to be. Hence, we keep talking about it.

All of a sudden, we were forced into changing how we do our normal things (gathering, worship, pastoral practice, outreach, mission activities, ...) and we had to change very fast. I remember the last Sunday I sat in worship wondering if we would be able to gather

the next Sunday, and what that would mean for us all. We weren't allowed to gather, and it meant we had to worship in a different way. It left the congregation's leadership scrambling - deciding what they could do, how they would do it, and how they would get the message out to the congregation so all could join in. And it happened! Not only in the congregation with whom I worship, it happened across our Presbytery, across the Synod, across the country.

We made these changes because of a virus, but we *made them in the power of the Holy Spirit!*

If you follow the liturgical calendar, you will know that we have just celebrated Pentecost, recalling that the Holy Spirit, the Helper Jesus promised to send, came and rested on the disciples and stirred them into action. After this Sunday (when we wrestle with the seemingly ungraspable nature of Trinity) we will be entering into a long season of "Ordinary Time" that will take us through to the celebration of Christ the King leading us into Advent. "Ordinary Time" is anything but ordinary! With its liturgical colour of green, it is a season in our church year when we look for new signs of life and growth. It is a time when we are nurtured as the people of God, and encouraged in our own discipleship in the world.

This is certainly no season - either in our liturgical calendar or through the restrictions we are still facing - to sit back and rest thinking that God will turn up when we can re-turn to "normal." God *has* turned up, God *is* at work: in us and through us in the world. The Holy Spirit is leading us in the changes we have needed to make, not just because we've had to respond to the guidelines and restrictions around COVID-19, also because as a church we have needed to change.

I do not for a moment think that God 'caused' this virus to emerge and travel around the world in the way it is doing. However, I do believe very firmly that God is moving and working through this time, and through the people who allow God to live and breathe and work in them. In us and through us, the Holy Spirit is bringing the life and hope that the world needs to know — for all people and for all of creation. "Ordinary Time" is not normal. There *is* no normal, unless it becomes normal for us to follow wherever the Spirit leads us. Oh! May it be so!

Blessings and peace,

Jenny.



Happy memories at St Stephen's

In the mid 1980's when our children were very young, Jack and I did not have much time for socialising. I was employed full time and Jack was the stay-at-home parent who went out to work as a musician in the evenings. Although we attended church on Sundays when possible, we did not know much about the other activities which took place during the week such as Fellowship and Continuity Group meetings and outings.

One Sunday, however, we heard that the Continuity Group were planning to have a Bush Dance in the Ferguson Hall and this sparked my interest, having attended several of these dances in small communities in western Victoria where I had previously spent three years. Those were always fun occasions.

The St Stephen's dance was held on a Saturday evening with a bush band on the stage and a dance caller who gave instructions. Jack and I decided to organise a babysitter and go to the dance. The hall had been splendidly decorated with gum leaves and a few bales of straw. A large number of the congregation and their friends attended and it was an eye-opener for us to see most of the Elders (who always wore suits and ties on Sundays) in casual attire! With the progressive dances like the Pride of Erin or the Barn Dance, people got to know each other a little better on their way around the room. We certainly learned more about St Stephen's friendly congregation and hospitality then. It was a very sociable event and, in true bush dance style, the supper at the interval was very enjoyable too!

Sheena Wiard

The Singles and Doubles Group

I have certain memories of good times spent as part of "The Singles and Doubles Group", which existed in the 80s during the time when the Rev Graham Hardy was Minister of the Word at St Stephen's.

This group existed to bring together members of the congregation between the mid 20s and the mid 40s for social activities and also Bible studies. One great thing about this group was that, as its name suggests, it included singles as well as couples - members who were "too old" for the Youth Fellowship Group - but perhaps still "too young" for other groups within the church.

I remember the fellowship and friendship we all enjoyed within this group. One of my favourite activities was "The Progressive Dinner" - it seems regrettable that this particular way of dining at each other's homes went out of fashion some time ago. We would have the first course at the home of one member or a couple - go onto the home of the second member/couple - and finally all drive to our third destination for dessert. Other activities included visits to the cinema or theatre, or dinners out at restaurants. There were probably day trips organised on Saturdays occasionally, perhaps for example to the Blue Mountains - but I do not have a clear memory of such events.

I am not sure that such a group would "work" in to-day's world. However, as we are all well aware, there are other options at St Stephen's today for people to come together. These social outings offer us the opportunity to get to know fellow members of our church better as well as to enjoy fellowship with them.

At this time when we are not able to gather freely for fellowship, Ken is providing opportunities for the congregation to stay in touch with one another through worship resource materials, regular newsletters and Zoom meetings. Alan is enabling members of the Tuesday congregation as well as others to stay connected through his weekly prayers, Bible readings and interesting commentaries. Members of our congregation have been phoning one another to see how everyone is faring during these somewhat challenging days. We have been learning to experience fellowship with one another in different ways.

This period of social distancing has nevertheless given some of us the opportunity to think also about the past; to remember the fellowship and warmth we experienced with other people at another time, people who were also very committed to St Stephen's, through groups such as "The Singles and Doubles".

Janice Dawson

'Work makes *love visible*'



The Handcraft Group, started in February 1995, was the inspiration of Verley McPheat, wife of Rev Dr Scott McPheat, Minister at Stephen's at that time. It was felt that the church needed a creative outlet for the many and varied talents of the women in the congregation. Many ladies – and men – worked hard for the group in various capacities, producing many items for sale. In mentioning names, one is always afraid of omitting someone, but it is important to recognise the early band of helpers, who including Heather Boddy, Margaret De La Garde, Irene Frost, Helen Glixman, Val Knott, Faith McAskill, Dixie Marshall, Joy Richter, Marjorie Rowlands, Joan Storie, Bernice Stewart, Margaret Thompson, Margaret Warden, and Ruth Waugh.

Ruth Waugh, former principal of Hornsby GHS, took all the marvellous photos that still appear on the cards for sale and which Margaret Warden made up; Helen Glixman sewed little girls' dresses, embroidered towels, handtowels and face washers, and crocheted rugs; Faith McAskill stitched wonderful tapestries and cushion covers; Olive Johnstone crocheted; Carmel Smithers made cards and knitted; Margaret De La Garde created beautifully embroidered cards; and of course, Marjorie Rowlands designed the beautiful banner that for many years stood near the piano. The banner was the first 'project' of the Group. Money was raised to purchase the material to make the banner, and under Marjorie's expert supervision the ladies would gather at her house to do the hand



stitching. The Handcraft Group was also a wonderful friendship group, continuing today for those who remain associated the group.

Of course, in an ex-Presbyterian Church, there had to be a committee, a constitution – dutifully written by Oliver Richter – and meetings which were held on the third Tuesday (originally Wednesday) of every month. There was a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, in latter years these positions being filled by Margaret De La Garde, Margaret Warden and Janice Dawson. These were business meetings as each member made/created their contributions at home and brought them to the meeting.

With all these creative types requiring materials, cottons, craft bits-and-pieces, and members donating goods for sale, storage became a necessity. The two rooms opposite the Ferguson Hall were handed over for the ever-increasing number of donations and crafted items to be sold to raise funds for the church. The Handcraft Room was open each Sunday during morning tea.

Street stalls, run by the Handcraft Group and the Adult Fellowship, became twice yearly events, in April and November. The stalls were started when Matthew Jack was Minister, and he helped to negotiate with Sydney City Council and find a way through their rules and regulations. Not only did the stalls sell craft goods, cards and donated items, but there were always cakes and plants – what street stall doesn't have cakes and plants? Many, many people cooked; Margaret Warden and Margaret Norquay both used to bring in boxes of goodies; and Geoff Allan, Vic Catchlove, and Lea Richards supplied many plants over the years. Among the craft items were beautiful knitted baby garments and rugs supplied by Pam Fisher and her group in Dee Why.

From small beginnings, and with everyone's help, donations and assistance over the years, the group was able to pay for or contribute towards so many things at the church including:

Furnishings:

\$10,000.00 towards the cost of recovering the cushions on the pew seats; recovering Minister's and Elders' chairs; folding tables and round tables and trolley; mats for the church foyer and stairs; acid-free mats for display cabinets; heater in Ferguson Hall;

Ecclesiastical garments and other items:

Choir gowns and stoles; preaching scarf for Alan Harper; pew Bibles and dedication plates; new Communion cloth;

Restoration work:

Restoration and framing of embroideries of St Stephen's (Phillip and Macquarie Streets); the display cabinets; photos of Burdekin House and other photos; the organ (through the Music and Cultural Foundation); post-construction window cleaning

Other:

Tablecloths; AV and sound systems; lapel microphone; dishwasher; dinner plates; shelves in the book room; a variety of office equipment items; St Stephen's guide brochures.

\$92,000



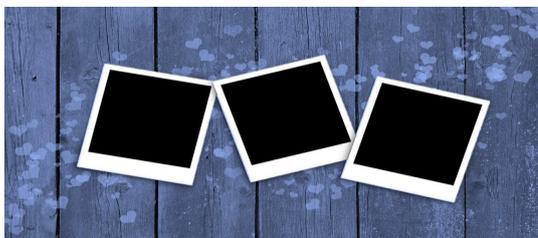
Each year there was a luncheon in January to which all who helped in the previous year were invited.

In latter years the group has been run by the hard-working Bernice Stewart and Margaret De La Garde. With changes being made at St Stephen's, the Handcraft Group has had to vacate its storage rooms and reconsider its position in a world of Coronavirus and younger generations who do not look for hand knits and craft items. Therefore, some of the items that were stored for future sale have been donated elsewhere: DVDs went to an on-seller who will give the money raised to community housing; books went to Lifeline, Newtown Mission, Sydney Eye Hospital and the Early Bird Café; clothes were given to Wayside Chapel and the Early Bird Café; most of the wool and fabrics went to the Sydney Adventist Hospital – the wool for knitting beanies for the Cancer Ward, the fabric for making single-use pouches for medical equipment, and some knitted blankets and shawls to be sent to The Hamlin Foundation in Ethiopia. Bexley West UC hold a market each month at which we will have a table, for a small fee, and the profits we make will go towards future necessary items for St Stephen's. It is so good to see that our craft items have been able to be passed to other organisations and that they will be well used.

There are too many people to mention and thank but to all who have helped, in any way, it has been greatly appreciated. A number of people have also contributed to this article, but thanks must go especially to Sheena Wiard, who has been trawling a lot of the Handcraft Group documentation kept over the years. As best as could be found, from 1995 to 2018, the Handcraft Group contributed over \$92,000 to projects within St Stephen's. This is a staggering amount of money and reflects the dedication to St Stephen's of so many women (and helping husbands). The attitude to service to others, as Jesus commanded us to do, has been evident throughout all the years of the Handcraft Group. Although circumstances will continue to change, as will the city environment where St Stephen's finds itself, the spirit of service will always live on.

Lauris Harper





A personal reflection on the Handcraft Group

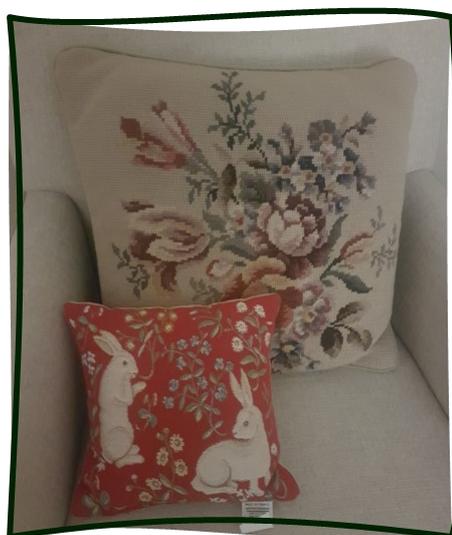
My mother, Mollie Barton, loved the Handcraft store! Every Sunday after Church and before morning tea she would be in there bargaining with Margaret De La Garde over some item that she had her eye on. Coat hangers were a particular favourite, as were the hand knitted scarves and berets, and children's hand-knitted jumpers. She often liked to have the cupboard at home full of these little treasures so she could give a gift to somebody whom she knew, overseas friends or someone who had offered kindness to her, as a gesture of her gratitude.

I remember buying some wool from the handcraft ladies to make my niece, Cara Horscroft-Smith, a jumper when she was around 3 years old. It was a lovely yellow/white pattern and all was going well until I had to do the neck! What a disaster! Dropped stitches everywhere. Never mind! Handcraft ladies to the rescue, and the jumper became a special favourite. Mmmmmm, yes, a pink jumper for my other niece Elise was ably rescued by Margaret de la Garde too. Dresses made by Helen Glixman became a popular Christmas/ birthday gift which the children loved to bits!

Mum also loved Faith McAskill's tapestries, several of which I still have in my home today.

I also was fortunate to give some wool to my 9-year-old great-niece Sophia to carrying on the wonderful traditions of the handcraft legacy. Her brother Jackson was also interested and went looking for right size knitting needles! On my next visit to Newcastle, I'll review their progress.

Judith Barton



Narromine News

The Saltbush Nursery was on the list of places to visit when St Stephens was supposed to be going to Narromine this year. This article, and the following, bring you a little bit about two people in the Narromine Congregation. (Ed.)

The Saltbush Nursery...

Vivienne Halbisch, Narromine, NSW.

It was 24 years ago when I turned 50, became a Grandmother for the first time and got an off farm job as a Saltbush Nursery Assistant. This was very challenging as I had never organised so many people before.



The nursery is the most advanced of its type in Australia and one of the most sophisticated in the world.

The first stage of the Nursery covers a total area of 25,000 Squares meters and can cater for up to 4.8 million seedlings at any point of time.

It provides a sheltered, controlled environment for the plant during their most vulnerable early stage of growth, specialised open hardening areas are provided for the plants prior to shipping and field transplanting.

All the plants are assessed at various points during their initial growth stage for robustness. This allows the selection of the strongest Oldman Saltbush seedlings for field planting providing the highest possible survival and establishment rates even in harsh conditions.

Oldman Saltbush (*Atriplex nummularia*) seedlings in the nursery commences in October and goes right through until February of each year.

After germination the seedlings are placed into a controlled, sheltered environment for 10 to 12 weeks. Then are strong enough to be placed on outside benches where they are hardened over a further 14 to 16 weeks. Regular watering, fertilizing, pruning and weeding operations are carried out during this period.

Prior to dispatching, the plants are pre fertilized, leaves air dried so as to remain at their absolute peak during transit to the field for planting.

The individual seedlings are taken from their growing trays and packed into specially developed waxed cardboard boxes which hold 600 fully primed seedlings ready for planting in the field. Depending on the number of seedlings ordered there is a mechanical transplanter available for big areas of seedlings to be planted. As they are planted they receive a little injection of water and then wait and see them grow.



Oldman Saltbush has long been recognised as a palatable drought fodder, particularly for sheep. It develops a lattice of woody stems which branch from or close to ground level and utilises a taproot with a subsequence root system that is moderate to deep.

Reprinted with permission from Geoff Wellington at Saltbush—Ruminations. Saltbush unites scattered communities across NSW and ACT

<https://saltbushcommunity.uca.org.au>

Gospel Folk



What does being a Brumbies fan have to do with the Gospel Folk?

Geoff Smith, founding manager of the Gospel Folk, explains.



Geoff, now busily retired in Narromine in central western NSW, admits to being a mad Brumbies supporter. Almost 20 years ago he tagged along with his Brumbies mates one day to Bruce Stadium where he heard the Australian Rugby Choir perform. “We saw these blokes

singing and I thought, Gee I wouldn’t mind being part of that,” Geoff recalls. “They were singing Welsh hymns and I had some of that in my background.”

So Geoff joined the Rugby Choir, where he first met their Assistant Conductor, Brian Triglone. Although the Rugby Choir sang at large events, it could not meet the all the requests it received to perform at the many smaller churches who had no resident choir and at retirement homes. Geoff, a practising Christian, approached Brian and asked he’d be interested in setting up a gospel choir, with some members from the Rugby Choir and women from other choirs. Initially called the Gospel Singers, in 2003 the new choir became the Gospel Folk.

While Brian looked after the musical side of things, Geoff did all the organising. He had a strong background in administration and management and these skills were invaluable in running the choir. He arranged the gigs, managed the members and finances and mentored new members. He and Brian would meet regularly in Brian’s saddlery shop in Woden to discuss new songs and plans to attract new members and expand the choir’s gigs. And it worked, with membership growing from around a dozen early members to more than 80 in 2014. In the early days most of the choir’s performances were at churches, but these days the choir sings at a wide range of events and venues across the ACT.

Geoff is quick to identify the main challenges he faced as the manager of the newly formed choir.

“Getting people along to practices and then getting them to come along on Sundays to sing at the gigs,” he says. “Brian and I had to use our persuasive skills.”

Although it kept him pretty busy, Geoff describes the Gospel Folk as a ‘win–win situation’: “For the singers, the value was in performing – in doing something that 10 years ago they wouldn’t have thought about. And of course in making new friends.”

At the same time, the choir gave back to the community, especially to the smaller churches and to the elderly. “There was a lack of stimulation for these people,” Geoff says. “We gave them a good reason to come to church and we were able to give something back to these old folk who had been pioneers in Australia. People got a thrill from watching us perform. They’d walk away feeling good.”

Echoing what current members still say about the Gospel Folk, he notes that right from its earliest days the choir had a special community feel. “The family of the Gospel Folk was very tight knit, supportive of each other. If someone was not feeling well, they were flooded with support, help and concern.”

These days Geoff continues to channel his energy into volunteer work. He is now a very active Rotarian, heavily involved in youth and health programs. He runs two agriculture programs in Narromine on cropping and the cotton industry for agriculture students from across the central west. Geoff has managed two Rotary District conferences with over 450 delegates at each conference. He has received many awards for his community involvement.

In his spare time, he writes poetry and he is a freelance journalist for newspapers and magazines. He is a popular speaker on the Rotary circuit.

He still keeps in touch with the Gospel Folk. He was a special guest at the choir’s 10th anniversary dinner in October 2013 and it is through his generosity that the new Gospel Folk website was designed and launched in May 2014.

So, whether you’re a rugby follower or not, the Gospel Folk is one good reason to be grateful to the Brumbies.

Reprinted from 2019 edition, with permission from Robin Leach at Gospel Folk:

<https://gospelfolk.com.au>

VALE

Arthur Lockley was born on the 13th of March, 1933 in Canterbury, and lived in Petersham with his parents George and Margaret and his older sister Doreen. He attended Petersham Primary School and then went on to Fort Street High School. Arthur did further study at



the Balmain Teachers' College, and at the same time he attended the Sydney Conservatorium, studying Voice as well as Musicianship and Harmony. Arthur had a beautiful, clear tenor singing voice and an equally beautiful speaking voice.

Arthur began to attend the Petersham Baptist Church as a small child, and was very much a part of that church family until the age of thirty, when he moved to

Armidale to teach at the Demonstration School there. The church was the centre of Arthur's life, and he was involved firstly in the Sunday School and then in Christian Endeavour, as well as in social activities with other members of the congregation.

Arthur's teaching career began at Pretty Beach Primary School in 1952, and from there began his steady advancement through the State Primary School system. Arthur taught in a large number of schools throughout NSW, including Bourke Street, Surrey Hills, Campsie and the North Sydney, Armidale and Bathurst Demonstration Schools. Arthur also worked for a time in Zambia as an Advisor in Primary Method. He later went on to serve as Principal at a number of different primary schools, including Petersham, Banks and Winmalee Public Schools. Towards the end of his teaching career, Arthur retired for a brief time only, as he quickly decided that retirement was not for him. He continued to work in different schools in Penrith and the Blue Mountains, and when he finally retired at the age of 79, he was the oldest serving teacher in NSW at the time.

After Arthur and I moved to Portland in 2013, we continued to attend St Stephen's where both sang in the choir. In addition, Arthur travelled to the church on Thursdays and Fridays, where he assisted in keeping the doors of the church open and providing security for the staff at the time. He especially enjoyed the Friday lunch time concerts, and he very much appreciated the friendship of different members of the congregation.

In 2013, Arthur was diagnosed with Alzheimer's, and his very gradual decline began. Initially I was able to work with the difficulties which accompanied Arthur's declining health, thanks to the assistance of family members and others. However, in 2018, Arthur had to be admitted to a nursing home in Oberon following a

fall; he was subsequently moved to another nursing home in Lithgow in 2019 and he passed away on the 24th April 2020.

Arthur had a huge energy and enthusiasm for life. Whilst teaching in Armidale, he attended the University of New England and gained his BA, majoring in Latin. He also had a number of lead roles in musicals and was very much involved in church life there, teaching at Sunday School and conducting church choirs. After Arthur returned from Zambia, we were married at the Petersham Baptist Church in 1973. After our marriage, Arthur continued his commitments in different areas of church life, including being the Church Secretary, as well as being a house parent at the Youth Hostel, which was part of Petersham Baptist. His boundless energy was well known and he was always smiling, good-humoured and serene. Arthur had that great gift of never allowing anything to disturb his inner peace.

Our family then moved to Winmalee, where we became very involved in the life of the local church as well as the Blue Mountains Musical Society. Our two children Catherine and Gavin became involved in music and drama, in which they both excelled.

I met Arthur on the steps of the Armidale Baptist Church in 1964 and “the sun came out”. He totally changed my life and outlook, and ours has been a wondrous and happy journey together. Arthur was simply the nicest person I have ever known and his life was centred on the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a variety of interests, from sports such as cricket and tennis to religious studies, as well as a love of poetry and art. In addition, Arthur loved people and found joy in being part of the church community. His whole life was a joyful expression of his very real faith. Arthur was kind, humble and very generous always and he touched so many lives because of these qualities. My

children commented that he never wanted anything for himself in the way of this world’s goods.

Arthur’s passing has been a great loss to our two children Catherine and Gavin, their spouses Brett and Renae and our grand-children Gabriel, William and Eleanor. Through this article, I wish to honour the memory and celebrate the life of the man and gentleman who will continue to inspire me all my days.

Ruth Lockley

Tributes to Arthur Lockley

Arthur worked tirelessly for the education of children, so that they could have the best opportunities in life. His kindness and good humour were legendary, and he brought love and laughter to us all.

(Extract)

Rev John and Mrs Joy Connor

He gave his heart and soul freely to those around him

Often with a quiet and loving smile

And more than anything else

He made you feel that you belonged....

(Extract)

Mark Hill

Arthur will long be honoured at St Stephen’s, and we will always remember his ready smile, his kindness, his optimistic nature - as well as his service to our church. We appreciate very much the wonderful contribution he made to the choir over a number of years, and his willingness to work two days a week at the church to welcome visitors and ensure the wellbeing of the staff. We extend our sincere condolences to Ruth, to Arthur’s and Ruth’s children and grand-children, and to all his good friends.

Janice Dawson

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE BIBLE VERSE?

For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

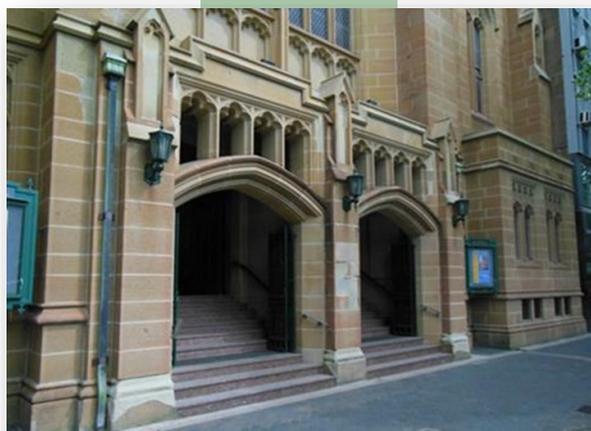
For it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God. (Eph. 2:8)

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. (Ps. 23: 1-3)

What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6: 9)

Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. (Pv. 3:5-6)

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rm. 5:8)



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