



St Stephen's Uniting Church in the city

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



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EDITORIAL

Over recent months, St Stephen's has been the centre of a variety of missional and outreach activities, as well as an oasis of peace. It seemed fitting therefore that we should choose the following words as our theme for this issue: *Pushing the boundaries: fellowship beyond our own community of faith*.

The act of worship presents us all with the opportunity to experience the peace of our worship space. We are able as well to "push the boundaries" through varied experiences during each service of the expression of our faith. In this issue, we only have space to focus on one special service – the one which took place to commemorate Anzac Day.

One of the highlights of the past three months has been the visit of a large number of the St Stephen's congregation to Narromine, to share fellowship with the members of the local Uniting Church over the long week-end in June. All the St Stephen's folk who participated were shown wonderful hospitality by the members of the Narromine Uniting Church congregation. Narromine put together a most interesting program – and it would be hard to say which was the best activity. There was the fantastic visit to the Royal Flying Doctor Service Centre near the Dubbo airport, and the demonstration of sheep shearing at a country property, followed by a huge bonfire and a delicious barbecue meal on the Saturday night. The Sunday morning service was a special time of worship, during which the Rev Ken preached a great sermon which was much appreciated by all. The ladies of the Narromine congregation provided wonderful meals for us; but best of all was the fellowship we all shared (and the laughter!). The different and varied experiences which made up "The Narromine Visit of 2021" have been recounted in this issue by some members of our congregation, as they recall how we experienced "fellowship beyond our own community of faith".

In this Winter Edition, we can also find an article about something truly "different" which unfolded over a period of some weeks in the life of St Stephen's. Betty Jacobs' project to create a special Pentecostal Cloth certainly involved challenges, as the whole church family was involved, whatever each individual's level of artistic talent might be! Betty gives us her special "take" on exactly what this project involved – and we now have a beautiful and unique cloth to grace our Communion Table.

When we consider the idea of "fellowship beyond our own community of faith", there immediately comes to mind the work of the Early Bird Café and the outreach of our church to the homeless and the marginalised. One special example of this desire to serve the wider community in a very practical way has been the involvement of quite a number of members in knitting beanies for the homeless. Readers cannot fail but be inspired by the dedicated work of the keen knitters of St Stephen's!

Another example of the fact that members of our congregation like to "push the boundaries" and do something different to benefit our community can be found in the article about Florence Bell, and her faithful commitment over the years to collecting used stamps from her wide circle of friends and acquaintances. Readers can find out more about Florence's special commitment to such a good cause in this issue.

Finally, we would like to pay a special tribute to three former members of St Stephen's, whose faith motivated them to serve our church faithfully over many years: Marjorie Rowlands, Shirley Forrest and Ruth Ponniah. We extend our sincere sympathy to all their families and friends, whilst at the same time we celebrate the long and fruitful lives which these three inspirational women led.

Janice Dawson



Fellowship beyond St Stephen's



Pushing the boundaries:

Fellowship beyond our own faith community

What an interesting theme our Editor has set us for this edition of *Vision*!

My own first reaction was to wonder what my community of faith *is*. Lauris and I have been members of St Stephen's for about eight years now, I guess, and have a good many friends among the Sunday congregation. But we're almost never at St Stephen's for Sunday worship! Our true community of faith at St Stephen's is the Tuesday congregation, a smaller but very faithful group of people whom we hold very dear indeed.

The reason we're almost never at St Stephen's on a Sunday is because we go to a number of other Uniting Churches around the place to lead worship. We have a commitment pretty much every Sunday. We count ourselves blessed indeed to be "honorary" members of quite a few other congregations – Narromine, Alpine (at Jindabyne), Brighton-le-Sands, Crookwell, Galston, Marsden Road (at Carlingford), Strathfield-Homebush; while there are several others we visit or have visited less often, and couldn't presume to have membership there. Whichever category, though, every one of these congregations is a vibrant community of faith, which has embraced us, and with whom we have shared, learnt and grown. These too are our communities of faith.

But not through any virtue of our own. Our experience is one of the miraculous things about the Church of Jesus Christ! In every congregation, of whatever denomination, in whatever place Jesus' followers may find themselves, we can walk in the door of a completely strange church building, full of people we've never met, perhaps speaking a language other than English, and we will be welcomed as family – as sisters and brothers in Christ. We will be made to feel at home, because we *are* at home! Have you ever contemplated how truly miraculous that is?

When Lauris and I travel on holidays, around the inevitable exigencies of demanding itineraries, we try to get to church on a Sunday morning as often as we can. We've visited churches around NSW, in Victoria, the ACT and South Australia, mostly Uniting but not all. We've visited various congregations in England, Wales and Scotland – Anglican, Baptist, Church of Scotland, Methodist. We've visited churches in New Zealand and the United States, though not as many. Every one of these far-flung congregations was different, certainly. And yes, to be honest, I have to confess that in just one or two, the family welcome was closer to what might have been extended to estranged relatives whose presence was regarded as an inconvenience or downright embarrassment. Those were not the happiest of homecomings, but they were also very much the exception. Everywhere else, strangers that we were, we were embraced with genuine friendship and gladness. We were recognised as family.

What was even more inspiring was the welcome accorded to us in the Catholic Church, next door to our hotel in Paris, where we attended Mass (in French);



and the Lutheran Cathedral in Berlin, where the service was naturally in German, though a very helpful English translation was provided. Not damned tourists, not inconvenient foreigners, but fellow believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, to be made welcome as family, despite the language barrier. What other institution of any kind offers such a wonderful worldwide communion? There is nowhere on the planet – nowhere – where the people of God do not welcome other people of God as sisters and brothers. I can only repeat, that this is one of the miraculous things about the Church of Jesus Christ.



In Mark's gospel, Jesus laid the foundation for this. Early in the gospel, Jesus' family became worried about him – about his mental health, and about his wellbeing – and came to him to try to rein him in and protect him from himself (Mark 3:20-35). When Jesus was told that his mother and brothers were outside, wanting to see him, he said to those gathered around him,

'Who are my mother and my brothers?' And looking at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.'

Of course Jesus was not rejecting his natural family. Giving honour to one's parents was the fourth commandment – the first after those that concerned God himself. We know of Jesus' continuing relationship with, and care for, his mother; and later, his brother James became a believer and leader of the Church in Jerusalem. It is not what Jesus said about his natural family that was revolutionary. It was the next bit – his statement about his *true* family. For *anyone* who "does the will of God" is Jesus' sibling. It's hard not to be reminded of John's Prologue.

But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

What Jesus refers to as doing the will of God, John refers to as receiving and believing in Jesus. They are one and the same thing. And that is the foundation of the extraordinary new family which Jesus announced to those gathered around him. *Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.*

While we may know what we mean by "our own community of faith", it is also a flawed idea. Where we worship and are well known might be like our nuclear family; but beyond its confines is a much larger family. They too are our relatives; or to put the focus where it belongs, they too are the sisters and the brothers of our brother, Jesus Christ. And *they* are every bit as much *our* community of faith. With them we have fellowship. When they gather for the divine meal – the family dinner – of wine and bread, we have a welcome seat at the family table. For we *are* family.

But our Editor used the phrase, "Pushing the boundaries" Are the things I've written above really "pushing the boundaries"? I'm not sure what Janice had in mind when she chose those words, but celebrating, enjoying and acknowledging the wonderful worldwide family we all have in Jesus doesn't feel much like boundary-pushing to me. I don't think I've

met her challenge yet. So I set about wondering where my boundaries needed to be pushed a bit in this regard.

As always, the answer lay in the words of Jesus. Holding the words we've already noted, *Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother*, in my mind, I recalled the challenging teaching in Matthew 25:31-46. It's the so-called parable of the sheep and the goats. We all know it. Upon his return in glory, Jesus separates people into two groups, just as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats. The "sheep" are blessed and inherit the Kingdom; the goats are accursed, and turned away into torment. The difference between the two groups is their treatment of the needy other: those counted as righteous had fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger, clothed the naked, nursed the sick, visited the prisoner. They had done these things as a matter of course, seeking no reward, and oblivious to the fact that in doing so, they were in fact ministering to Christ himself. The unrighteous, however, had been uncaring of those in need, and

We should all find this element of the story challenging and troubling.

For it is true that we claim membership of an extraordinary worldwide family, the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. But the story of the sheep and the goats underscores how vital it is that we take to heart the one and only criterion for membership of that family: *Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother*. Turning up, holding formal "membership", and counting ourselves as part of Christ's body count for nothing, unless we are doers of the will of God. Otherwise we'll find ourselves among those who were shocked to be set aside with the unrighteous, crying out against what we thought was the injustice of it all. Otherwise we'll find that we were never really members of the family at all.



their reaction to Jesus' condemnation suggests that, had they realised that Christ was present in the needy, they would cynically have acted differently, so as to earn his favour. The point of the story is that love of, and care for, others in need should be in our nature, and not something that we do to gain "brownie points".

That's the *point* of the story, but the unsettling thing about the story is that those in both groups had no expectation that they would be where they were placed. Those counted as righteous were as surprised as those who were numbered with the unrighteous.

And by the same token, in our self-righteousness and self-satisfaction, we may also find ourselves shocked by those who *are* counted members of the family instead of us. For there are many beyond what we regard as the community of faith who do the will of God. Some of them may well be people upon whom we look down, people for whom we can see no place in the Church, perhaps even people we'd really rather not know. They are, in our Editor's phrase, well "beyond our own community of faith"; perhaps we judge them as well beyond *any* community of faith. But Jesus' judgments are not our judgments. Jesus' mother and sisters and brothers are all who do the will of

God. *That* is the community of faith; it behoves us to be sure that that is *our* community of faith, and that our place in it is merited, not because we deem it to be so, but because our actions in doing the will of God speak for us. For in the end, "boundaries" are of our own making, and it is Jesus who pushes them well beyond our comfortable idea of "our" community of faith.

Alan Harper OAM

Opening our minds to fresh insights

One aspect of the theme for this issue of *Vision* is contained in the words "Pushing the Boundaries". I tend to believe that as members of the St Stephen's family, starting with the Rev Ken Day and extending right throughout our congregation, we definitely show a willingness to open our minds and our souls to new insights. These insights would encompass a fresh understanding as to how exactly we might live out the message of Jesus in our world to-day. But being open to fresh insights also extends to having a better understanding of the world in which we live, and being open to a better knowledge of the past, as free of prejudice and bias as possible.

I have very recently read a book which has challenged some of my misconceptions and has opened my mind to a new understanding of the history of Aboriginal Australians, or as we tend to call them today, the "First Nations People". I'm sure that quite a number of readers will be aware of the debate surrounding the book "Dark

Emu", written by Bruce Pascoe – a debate which has been ongoing since not long after it was first published in 2014. A new book has recently been published called "Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers? The *Dark Emu* Debate", written by two well-known and well-respected academics, namely the anthropologist and linguist Peter Sutton and the archaeologist Keryn Walshe. I was motivated to buy this book after hearing these two academics interviewed on the ABC by Fran Kelly.

This new book has been something of an eye-opener for me! The first thing I noticed when I began to read it is that it appears to be free from political bias; it concentrates on the facts – as far as it is possible to know them – regarding the lives of our Aboriginal peoples

before the coming of the British to the Australian continent. One might disagree of course with the point of view of Peter Sutton when he describes the explorers as "...the forward scouts for the army of land-hungry farmers who would come in their wake". What can't be denied, however, is Sutton's astounding knowledge of the habits and way of life of our First Australians, their spirituality and their mindset. This knowledge and these insights have been gained through collaborative research with Aboriginal people which Peter Sutton has been carrying out over the past fifty years.

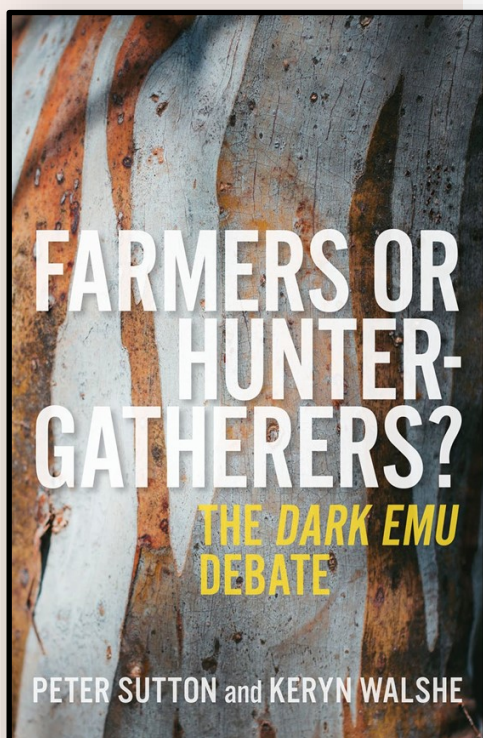
The final two chapters were written by Keryn Walshe, who writes primarily about the so-called "agricultural implements" which Bruce Pascoe refers to in "Dark Emu", and the archaeological evidence for settlement at the famous Lake Condah within the Budj Bim National Park.

This book has well and truly opened my mind to the complexities of what Sutton defines as "the hunter-gatherer plus" lifestyle of the First Nations people. Sutton and Walshe confirm that the First Australians were not in fact farmers, and their opinion is supported by factual evidence and by thorough reading and research, as well as their lived experiences "in the field". There are a number of important points which I will take away from the reading of this book. I was amazed, for example, to read that it was a conscious choice on the part of the Aboriginal tribes not to practise agriculture. In a sense, they saw no need to till the earth, as they appealed to "The Dreaming and the Spirits of the Ancestors" through rites, songs and dances to continue to make the earth fruitful; Sutton refers to this as "spiritual propagation".

It needs to be said that Bruce Pascoe has responded by stating that he welcomes the ongoing discussions which will naturally flow from the publication of this book.

Reading "Farmers or Hunter-Gatherers?" has very definitely ensured that I am much better informed, having been prepared to "push the boundaries". Venturing beyond pre-conceived ideas to embrace new knowledge and insights is definitely an enriching experience.

Janice Dawson



Narromine

Alan's and my yearly ministry visit to St Andrew's Uniting Church Narromine is always a time to which we look forward. This year's visit was our sixth, but what made this year's visit different from others? First and foremost of course is that in 2020, car packed and ready to go, we received a phone call – *"we love you . . . but don't come."* Covid had got in the way. So it was two years since we had last been there, and how different things were to 2019.

In 2019 Narromine and the west were in the grip of the drought. Since October 2016 there had been below average rainfall and the Dubbo region, which takes in Narromine, was the hardest hit in the Central West. Each year, as a keen amateur photographer, I take a little time to photograph the countryside, and of course I did so again this year. But bearing in mind that two years had elapsed, and the drought had broken, I revisited some of the same spots as 2019 to record the differences. And weren't they enormous. The parched field on



Tantitha Rd with sheep grazing (!) on it was now beautifully green and lush. In 2019 Pinedean Rd off the Tomingley Rd, just south of town, had field after field of totally dried up pasture; today on the Warren Rd, just a little north of town, there are fields of lucerne where herds of sheep contentedly graze.

Despite Covid, the town has fared very well. One pub (of the four in town) has closed at least temporarily, but everything else is still the same, though a few businesses have moved premises. In talking with people in the streets and shops, everyone seemed to feel that the town had survived very well, thank you, and that Covid (the one and only case – an overseas returnee) had really had little or no impact.

You know that you are becoming a little part of the community when non-church people call out to you in the street and stop for a chat. Glen, the butcher at Short's Butchery, greeted us

warmly one sunny Sunday afternoon when we were walking back from lunch with some of our church friends at the Royal Hotel. Ruth Carney, a local indigenous identity and past Shire Councillor (among many other roles she has had) also greeted us with warmth, affection and stories of her now deceased husband Dick, and the book that they had written about their lives – but especially about Dick's upbringing and how he had come to Narromine from much further out west. A visit to our friends at the local Craft Shop is always a must – we come away with jams and pickles every time. If you are a *Women's Weekly* aficionado then you will have seen in the May issue an article on the Narromine Craft Shop.

As usual, we ran weekly services at the aged-care facility, Timbreebongie House; and visited just about everyone in the congregation enjoying MANY cups of tea and listening to their stories, and with those on farms, hearing about their recovery from the drought. Unfortunately, some had had good feed har-



vests, but the mice had devoured much of it and so they were still left with very little.

And speaking of mice . . . we were extremely fortunate *not* to see any in the Manse, but they had certainly been in the church hall (mugs were hygienically kept in the fridge!!) At Andersons' farm mice had eaten through fold-up chairs. Other parts of the region had been much worse affected. One church couple, driving back from Dubbo one night, commented that the road had been just moving with all the mice. They just drove straight over the top of them, but it didn't make much difference to the numbers! We were asked out to the Dandaloo church (122 km return away) to run an Easter service, and in talking

over morning tea we heard some horror stories about the mice infestations on their farms. IF YOU ARE EATING, STOP NOW! Mice were eating everything. One family, who had been away for a short while, came home to find not only their air-conditioning foils and ducts totally eaten out, but mice, having died in the ceiling, all maggot-infested. So, besides the smell of mice and their dirt (which everyone in any town we visited spoke about) there were also the rotting, maggot-infested dead mice and their even worse odour. I don't think any of us could really imagine what this was like, but it is all part of country life. But it is also impossible to get away from the biblical proportions of what has been happening in the country – drought, fire, flood, pandemic, pestilence – only two to go to match the seven plagues in Egypt.

A country ANZAC Day service is always very special and at Narromine it feels like the whole town – young, middle aged and old (even in golf buggies) – turn out to commemorate those who paid the ultimate price. Alan spoke at the



dawn service (6.00am on a cold morning), and there were two other services later in the morning, all well attended. The highlight for me was the Veterans' March, with an elderly man dressed in leggings, lace-up boots, spurs, uniform and slouch hat of the WWI Australian Light Horse, carrying the Australian flag and riding his horse at the beginning of the parade. This gentleman and his horse have been participating in the parade for more years than I know. It is a significant tribute. We don't think a lot about the horses that went to war, but of the thousands that were deployed, only one returned.

After two years' absence, our April visit to Narromine was even more special than usual, but it was then capped off by the congregational visit by St Stephen's over the June long weekend. The generosity and hospitality of the Narromine people, which we know so well, was absolutely on display, and the Church members worked incredibly hard to make the visit enjoyable and successful. They set a very high standard for their return visit to Sydney in 2022!





When Janice asked me if I would write a story about our forthcoming visit to Dubbo's Royal Flying Doctor Visitor Experience for the winter edition of *Vision* I thought to myself, "This lady knows something". The Royal Flying Doctor Service is one of my favourite organizations, and in particular, as some of you have already found out, I am very interested indeed in the story of how it all started. So you can imagine how thrilled I was when I saw that our good friends at St. Andrew's Narromine had included the RFDS "Visitor Experience" at Dubbo in the itinerary for the St. Stephen's three day visit to Narromine over the June Queen's Birthday Weekend.



The new Visitor's Centre opened to the public in September 2019. It was closed for two months because of the Covid shut down, which means it has only been opened for about 19 months. On 12th April 2021 it received its 50 thousandth visitor.

On Saturday 12th June, we all met at the Narromine Church to commence the half hour drive to Dubbo. We were not allowed to drive our own cars, as we were to travel with our Narromine friends in their vehicles, arriving at the RFDS Visitor Centre at around 9.30am. On entry into the Centre, you enter a world of doctors, nurses, pilots and outback communities. You experience their stories and challenges across Australia's outback. You can walk through the split fuselage of an aircraft, see the controls and interact with the touchscreens and aeromedical equipment, as if you're flying with them thousands of kilometres to the nearest hospital. On large screens, you can watch the actual location of the planes and teams as they retrieve patients and provide

healthcare across the remote areas of our continent. You can watch and listen to extraordinary tales from everyday Aussies about the challenges of living in the vast outback, and visit a treatment room and receive a first-hand experience of the vital equipment and learn about the dedicated health professionals who operate it.

This is not the first RFDS Visitor Centre Barbara and I have visited. We have already been to Broken Hill, Alice Springs, Port Augusta and now Dubbo. The RFDS has been autonomous since 1939 and from then on no longer part of the Australian Inland Mission (AIM). However, it is pleasing to see it is always very conscientious in sharing the history of the organization.

Rev John Flynn began his outback ministry on 24th January 1911 at the Smith of Dunesk Mission in South Australia. He was 31 years of age and had



been ordained for only one week. It was at this time John Flynn became greatly concerned at the lack of medical facilities for the people of the outback. As he patrolled his parish he heard many stories of heartbreak and sadness and so the vision of his "mantle of safety" started to be formed in his mind.

In 1912 the Presbyterian Church commissioned John Flynn to report to the Church's General Assembly of Australia on the needs of both Aborigines and European Settlers. In Melbourne on the 26th September 1912, Flynn's report was accepted and the AIM was born with Rev John Flynn as its Superintendent.

The nursing sisters of the AIM were often referred to as "Flynn's Outback Angels", a very fitting title. They played a major role in fulfilling John Flynn's dream for that "mantle of safety".

The First World War, while exerting great pressures on the AIM, also provided unexpected blessings because of technological advances in aviation and

radio. Flynn realised that to overcome the tyranny of distance, something more was needed in addition to the hospitals. I read that in about 1917 John was camping out in the bush, lying in his swag and looking up at the Southern Cross. We know how one can feel close to God when you see those brilliant outback starry skies. He suddenly thought, "That's the answer, these newfangled aeroplanes". About the same time John Flynn received a letter from Lieutenant Clifford Peel, a young airman serving in the First World War. Peel was a medical student and put forward his idea of an aerial medical service. Very timely! Sadly, Clifford Peel was killed in action. While seeing the potential of a flying doctor service, Flynn realized that without widespread use of wireless by people in the bush, the link between patient and doctor could not be formed. The development of the pedal radio was fundamental to the development of the flying doctor service.

Adelaide radio engineer Alf Traeger teamed up with John Flynn to work on a radio transmitter to break the silence of the outback.

After much experimenting, the pedal radio was invented with the first satisfactory transmission between Alice Springs and Hermannsburg Mission on 26th November 1926.



John Flynn had the ability to draw people into his way of thinking. He never offended and few could withstand the charm of his personality, kind, relaxed and whimsical. My Dad used to tell a story of what happened during his ministry at St. Andrew's Longreach, when he attended the Assembly Meetings of the Presbyterian Church in Brisbane. He would stay at Brisbane's Canberra Temperance Hotel with other ministers from the country, and John Flynn would keep them up until 2am talking about his plans for the outback.

So it was that Flynn enjoyed the friendship of two important men in Australia's history, Hugh Victor McKay of Sunshine Harvester fame and Sir Hudson Fysh, co-founder of Qantas. He also had the support of the Prime Minister at the time, Billy Hughes. Without the support of these men a flying doctor would probably have never taken to the skies. Qantas provided the first plane and H.V. McKay's financial help enabled the first air ambulance service of the Presbyterian

Church's AIM Aerial Medical Service to go into action. This took place on 17th May 1928 from Cloncurry to Julia Creek, a distance of 85 miles.

John Flynn would never have dreamed that from the humble beginning in 1928 at Cloncurry, his vision for an aerial medical service covering the outback would have resulted in these statistics for the past year – providing primary healthcare and emergency services to over 1000 people every day, over 7.69 million square kilometres of Australia – 320,100 total patient contacts were made through RFDS clinics, aeromedical transports and telehealth consultations – 76508 patients in rural and remote areas used telehealth services – 20134 nurse, GP and dental clinics – 79 aircraft – 27,250, 793Kms flown – 23 air bases – 180 healthcare road vehicles – 55 daily health clinics – 2391 medical chests held on outback properties – 13627 dental care episodes – 62895 patients transported by road.



Some of us are past Presbyterians, and while we now show allegiance to the Uniting Church, we can be very proud of the fact that our Auld Kirk adopted the recommendations of its servant and visionary, The Very Rev John Flynn O.B.E., D.D. Moderator General 1939-42, Superintendent AIM 1912-51, and so became the forerunner to that great outback servant we have today – The Royal Flying Doctor Service.

So my friends, every time you take a \$20 note out of your wallet or purse and look at that kindly face, say a little prayer - thanking God for giving the Presbyterian Church - John Flynn. For giving the people of the Australian outback - John Flynn. For giving The World - John Flynn.

Ron Mallyon

Narromine

The trip to Narromine to spend time with our twinning congregation was a trip worth a trillion words. Florence rode with us and we stopped at the biggest lolly shop I have ever seen. We stayed at "The Abbey", a bed and breakfast, which had expert food facilities and amazingly comfy beds!

On Friday night at the welcome meal, I met two new friends, Matthew and Maya. They are around my age, ages 11 and 10. We hit it off from the first few minutes together.

On Saturday afternoon, we all went to a farm and were hosted for the late afternoon and evening. First, we had a sheep shearing demonstration. At the sheep shearing demonstration, we were given a chance to participate. Maya, Mathew and I were provided with some instructions before it was our turn. When it was Mathew's turn, he was in my opinion a bit worried. But it worked out well for all three of us. I enjoyed my go at sheep shearing.

After this, there was a BBQ. We all ate sausages, bread and Mars bar slices which were my favourite. We all enjoyed the bonfire. At the bonfire Mathew and Maya chased me and I fell on the logs. But I did not get hurt. We also played games together. When we got bored, we all played "Among Us" (a game) and there were 2 impostors (characters in the game "Among Us") who turned out to be Mathew and Maya. I have no idea how this happened. Some of the adults played with us, which was fun.

In my opinion we all had a very good time. I enjoyed meeting new people and building new relationships with everyone from the Narromine congregation and making two new friends.

In conclusion, we all loved our trip and were all very happy.

Written by Kurt Brunelle Hunter

Edited by Scott Brunelle



Dear Janice,

Thank you so much for your email. It was our pleasure and delight to have St. Stephen's folk visit. I am glad you enjoyed the visit as much as we did having you here.

There are so many beautiful and historic places around Sydney that we would love to see on our visit next year.

Thanks again. Kind regards

Barbara Sunderland

Secretary

Narromine. Church Council

trip highlights



In order to avoid the June long weekend traffic, I set off from home on Thursday morning. Crossing the mountains, I drove through one of the heaviest snowfalls for decades. Between Katoomba and Mt Victoria the region had been transformed into a winter wonderland; absolutely beautiful. The countryside between Bathurst and Orange was also covered in snow.

I spent Friday morning at Narromine's excellent Aviation museum. Great displays; well worth a visit. Their premier exhibition is a full size flying replica of the 'Wright Flyer' aircraft, built locally by a group of aircraft enthusiasts.



On Friday evening, it was great to finally meet up with the Narromine folk over dinner; a beautiful assortment of homecooked food was provided in the comfortable warm environs of their church hall.

On Saturday evening we headed out to Rob and Chris Samuel's property, 'Dappo'. Here we were treated to a shearing demonstration by Brian, a local shearer. This was followed by a huge bonfire/barbecue. A very memorable occasion. Thank you Rob and Chris!



Sunday morning church was a highlight. It was so nice to share in worship with our Sisters and Brothers from Narromine, filling the church to capacity. We were able to continue getting to know one another over morning tea and lunch; an invitation was further extended to the St Stephen's folk to return in the evening for home made soup.

I personally want to thank Geoff Smith and his organising team for arranging such a lovely weekend get together.

Geoff Greenwell

Dear Janice

Many thanks for your kind words of support for our efforts.

The challenge is out to the Sydney folk but I am sure with all the resources you have in Sydney, you will come up with something special.

I have received several positive comments from Sydney folk. They make the efforts worthwhile. Tell your friends at St Stephens for the next trip out west.

Blessings

Geoff

Twinning

This space of being together,
It's such a precious time.
We fit together, like a glove,
St Stephen's and Narromine.

When followers of Jesus
From different churches twin,
It's living in the unity:
We're family, we're kin.

We share in laughs and listening,
We feel at home, at ease.
We even braved the Covid town,
And listed.....
Not one Dubbo snuffle, or one sneeze.

Geoff and the team's great planning,
Your cooks' amazing food,
And Rob and Chris's open fire
And woolly sheep Leaving nude.

We saw the Flying Doctor
Started by Flynn and Fred
We've even had a place to stay -
Your homes in your spare beds.

So, as you know, we both are twins
Some say we share our brains.
And even if her shoes don't match
'Twin blood' runs in our veins.

So we'd love to keep this twinning,
We hope you'll let it be.
Our nod to Jesus' love for all,
With joy and harmony.

Margaret Horcroft and Judith Barton





Amazing Narromine

Right from the get-go, we knew we were going to have an amazing long weekend in Narromine. Judith and I had to brave snow in the mountains as well as rain and sleet just to get there!

We of course arrived last to a rousing applause (I think everyone was starving and they had held up the amazing first night dinner until everybody had finally arrived.) Judith and I settled in very comfortably in the amazing digs of Ross and Carole King.

There were activities such as visiting the Flying Doctor Service Centre, the 3801 steam train in Dubbo station, the arts and craft shops, shearing of sheep and an amazing afternoon tea of scones with jam and cream at Chris's and Rob's. The afternoon tea was followed by walk around the property, then the bonfire was lit for an amazing bbq. There was a wonderful selection of delicious slices for dessert.

Then on Sunday, there was the amazing church service - but the hospitality and friendship, the laughter and fun between our two uniting, and united communities really stood out for me.

I will cherish the memories for a long time to come.

Well done, amazing Narromine!

Margaret Horscroft



Pentecost Communion Cloth



Betty's Story

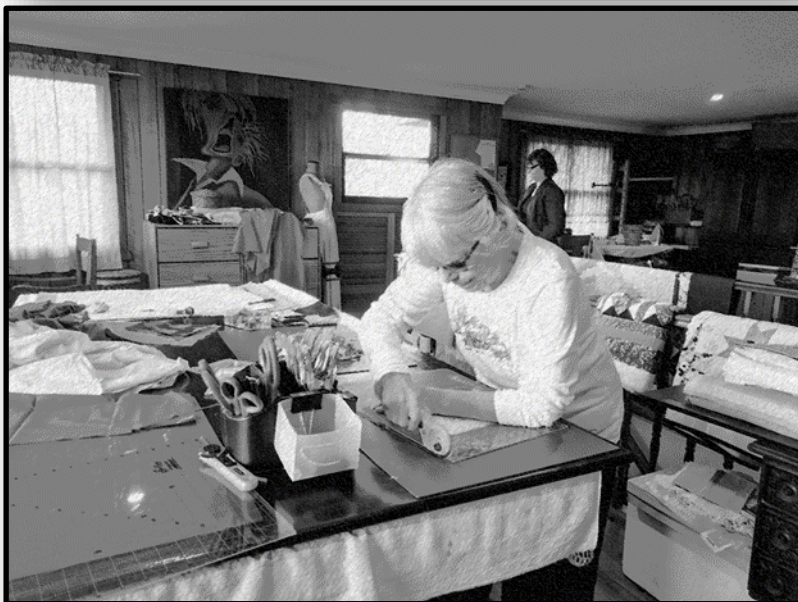
A month or so ago, Ken had this great idea! "Let's make a tablecloth for the Communion Table for Pentecost that the congregation contributes to. Can you take on that project Betty?" I rolled my eyes and smiled and said: "Sure!"

Instructions were written for our Pentecost Communion Tablecloth (PCT) and the colours of fire were settled. About 50 squares of fabric were cut and distributed to all who were willing. I put on my best teacher voice and said: "This is compulsory." I received back about 45 squares - not bad! I had some very willing helpers in Kathryn, Graham and Caroline, Ken and Sue in that part of the project, and as far as I am aware, only one square was lost in the gathering process. This in itself was amazing considering the chaotic state of the building at the moment with all sorts of electrical and organ builders working all week, and other people using our church as their venue for events. Then there was another Covid19 loose lockdown so, unable to sing, I was not around for two weeks and others were delegated to collect and deliver.

Last weekend Kathryn, Sue, Glenda and I had such fun with the great unpacking of blocks to see what had arrived. We spent the morning crawling around the floor, reconstructing blocks that were damaged, and sorting an order that worked visually. None were rejected (although one was lost and was reborn). By lunch time (delicious food was supplied by the PCT Team), we had trimmed and arranged all the blocks of our 'fire wall' with lots of laughs and some frustration (with sewing machines not working and block pieces falling off).

Part way through the process of joining all the pieces we decided to check the measurements and, oops, I had trimmed them all to the wrong size, so more maths and fabric engineering later, we had changed our layout and design to accommodate my faux pas!

We were even worried enough about our measurements that we needed to phone Ken to re-measure the Communion Table, only to find his measurements matched ours exactly.

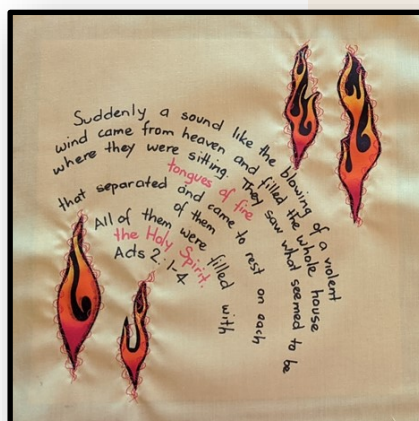


By evening the PCT was complete, except for the back which needed to be added the next day. We decided it was far too late to think about how to do that so we agreed it was 'wine time' and dinner time (leftovers from lunch - delicious again). By the end of the Sunday (when I decided that my 'service' was to sew as I was not allowed to sing due to Covid19), the PTC was ready to be transported to the church. Thank you, Ken and Sue, for providing the transport.

The Tablecloth has a choir end - with lots of blocks from the music team plus others, a front that includes some fantastic blocks and most of you are represented including our children, a royal end with more blocks, and the back on which there is a label and space for more blocks. So it is a "But wait, there's [room for] more!" project. If you still have your square and would still like to contribute we can attach them on for you in one of the blank spaces. The back is very bare, so there is plenty of room there and the cloth could be made reversible.

I made three blocks.

The choir - I did the drawing when I was about 16 for my church newsletter (All Saints Woollahra). I was given the background 'choir' fabric by a friend who sings with me in another choir and I had the music fabric in my stash.



The verses about Pentecost found in Acts - the flames were donated by a friend in my patchwork group and I even found a 'flame-like' fancy stitch on my sewing machine.

So what did I learn from this project?

- When Ken says he has an idea you have two choices - run the other way crying out "No! No! No!" or just see where it leads!
- God loves everyone and their efforts, and so must I, even if those efforts are awkward to work with.
- Sometimes things get difficult but with time, prayer, patience, a few sleepless nights, and many willing workers, magic things can happen - friends were made, creative talents were discovered and opportunities arose to tell the Pentecost story to those unfamiliar with it.
- Always read the instructions over and over again and then check them again.
- The terms 'fabric engineering' and 'wine time' were new to me.
- Not everything is perfect, so our cloth is "imperfectly perfect".

So thank you everyone for your contribution of squares and time to create our "imperfectly perfect" Pentecost Communion Tablecloth and for the extra organisation and hands needed to bring it together.

Betty Jacobs



The patchwork - those who know my style of patchwork will understand this one which includes my 'leaders and enders' that always come in handy.

Heads-up on Hats for Homeless

Hats for Homeless provides beanies for those sleeping rough over winter. This local initiative, created by Pastor Susan Russell and Rev. Brian Woodhouse, is supported by Uniting and the Uniting Church NSW-ACT. As a gesture of care and an expression of God's love, "Hats for Homeless" aims to bring warmth to the lives of those who find themselves in challenging life situations.

Homelessness can affect anyone at any time due to sometimes the smallest of life changes. Some of the causes of homelessness are pandemics such as COVID, natural disasters, mental health, disability, domestic violence and/or abuse, loss of employment, loss of a partner, physical health issues, drug and alcohol addiction and lack of affordable housing options. After Brian and Susan spoke about "Hats for Homeless" at the Anzac Day Service, members of our St Stephen's family have joined the band of dedicated knitters to make



beanies, fingerless mittens and scarves for the homeless and disadvantaged people in our city.

Susan Russell and Kathryn Lynch host a regular "Knit-in" at St Stephen's on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Everyone is invited to come along and to bring a knitting loom, knitting needles or crochet hook with them to be part of a fun, creative time. There are some looms for sale at a cost of \$25 and other knitters are there to help beginners get started. Members of the group often bring balls of wool from home and have found that chunky wool is best; but all sorts of wool, in all sorts of colours are used. Donated balls of wool are also available. There is always tea, coffee and yummy refreshments to share on the day.

The beanies made by the St Stephen's knitters are distributed through the "Early Bird Café". If you would like to know more about "Hats for Homeless" visit their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/834234886955876>

or speak to Susan Russell, Kathryn Lynch or Graham Penn.



Graham Penn

Florence Bell: Collecting Used Stamps for a Good Cause

Within the Uniting Church, there is a team of volunteers who collect used stamps to raise funds in order to further the work and mission of the Church. Amongst that group of volunteers is our very own Florence Bell. For a significant number of years now, Florence has been collecting used stamps from her wide circle of friends and acquaintances. Florence talks often with them of the ways in which the money earned from the sale of these stamps will be used. The funds collected will, for example, assist the people of the Outback through the work of Frontier Services; come to the aid of the elderly and the disabled through the organisation called Uniting; and help those in our community who are going through difficult times due to floods, droughts or other emergency situations.

Every four to six weeks, Florence takes all the used stamps which she has collected into the offices of Synod on the 2nd floor at 262 Pitt Street. There, the members of the Stamp Committee trim, sort and sell the used stamps. Synod raises funds by selling stamps in bulk to stamp dealers and by keeping stock books of stamps to sell to collectors.

For some time now, due to a decline in the number of letters being sent, the Stamp Committee has been struggling to meet the demand for used stamps. That's why Florence's work is so valuable – because her "personal touch" and her easy way with people help to ensure a continuing supply of used stamps for Synod. Florence is given a regular update regarding the money which the Stamp Committee has made over the most recent period of time, and Florence promptly passes this information on to all those who kindly keep her supplied with their used stamps. The last figure given to Florence was \$12,500; this sum represents all the money earned through the sale of used stamps from the beginning of 2021 up until the end of April. It's wonderful to see that such a large sum of money was raised in just a few months, simply through the sale of used stamps.

Florence is a perfect example of different members of the St Stephen's family who are not afraid to "push the boundaries" and go beyond the well-established ways in which we seek to serve God. Bravo, Florence! You inspire us all.

Janice Dawson



ANZAC DAY



A Day of Remembrance

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning,
We will remember them.
Lest we forget*



At dawn on 25 April 1915 a contingent of Australian and New Zealand Soldiers landed on Turkey's Gallipoli Peninsula. It was with this landing that there began to emerge the tradition of ANZAC. Originally ANZAC Day was a mark of respect for those who served and sacrificed their lives in the Great War. However, in the years since WWI, Australian service men and women have answered the call in conflicts across the globe and ANZAC Day has become the day on which the nation remembers those who served and those who made the supreme sacrifice.

For the church, ANZAC Day is an important opportunity to reflect on the notion of sacrifice, the ultimate example of which we have in Christ, who loved us and therefore went into battle against sin and was victorious by dying in our place. He gave His life, so that we can have a relationship and peace with God.

The ANZAC Day Service at St Stephen's on Sunday 25th April 2021 was led by Rev. Ken Day, Rev. Brian Woodhouse, Pastor Susan Russell, the St Stephen's

music team and members of the congregation.

The Worship Service included:

- prayers for those who bear the physical and emotional costs of war and for peace in our troubled world;
- the "Act of Remembrance" led by Ron Mallyon and bugler Phill O'Neill;
- the hymns, "The Lord's My Shepherd", "Lead Kindly Light", "Let There be Peace on Earth" and "Praise My Soul the King of Heaven";
- the choir anthem, "Greater Love Hath No Man";
- and the organ postlude "Toccata Gallipoli", composed by Huw Belling and played by Nico Tjoelker.

The Gospel Reading was from John 10:11-18, which tells of the good shepherd who knows his sheep, is known by his sheep and who gives his life for his sheep. Focusing on this passage, Ken encouraged us to give thanks for the self-giving love of Jesus and the people in our lives who guide and shepherd us. He asked us to think about what we most value within our relationship with God.

Ken reminded us that as Christians, we live within the promise that Jesus, the Good Shepherd is always searching for us and seeking to bring us into His fold. We were also challenged to acknowledge that the Good Shepherd's flock is bigger than our family, friends, church and beliefs.



In introducing the “Hats for Homeless” initiative, Rev. Brian Woodhouse spoke about his ANZAC tribute. He explained that in his small collection of WWI letters, passed on to him from his grandmother, one always stood out. It was not from a family member but from a young man not immediately related to the family.

In part it reads:

***“My Dear Young Ada,
My heartfelt thanks to you for
the care package that arrived
this morning. As the evenings
grow colder I will remember you
with enduring fondness. I shall
be the only sentry on duty not
shivering from the snowy cold
wind that blows right through.”***

In the care package that was sent by Brian’s grandmother, at the age of 13, there was a knitted balaclava and a pair of hand-knitted socks. Brian decided to use his knitting looms, to make a pair of socks and a balaclava as his own tribute to those days of unimaginable hardship and deprivation.

Pastor Susan Russell then went on to explain more about “Hats for the Homeless”. She encouraged members of the St Stephen’s congregation to participate in the making of beanies for those people who are doing it tough and sleeping rough on the streets.

After finishing the ANZAC Day March through the CBD, the Knox Grammar Pipes and Drums played outside the church building at the conclusion of the service.

So in commemorating ANZAC Day, we do not seek to glorify war, but to give thanks for those who have laid down their lives, whilst honouring and worshipping Jesus for the sacrifice He made in order to save us.

Included in the Order of Worship was the following prayer:

***Lord of all the ages, thank
you that in times past, men
and women stood for right-
eousness in the presence of
evil and aggression.***

***We thank you for those who
gave their lives in the service
of freedom,***

***for all who in battle suffered,
all who were taken prisoner,
for all wounded in body, mind
and spirit.***

***We thank you for so many
who gave so much in staying
behind; all those who worked
in factories, offices and on
the land.***

***God of eternity, deliver us
from the bonds of hatred
against the enemy.***

***Give us the strength to dis-
card the power of revenge.***

***Help us make this world a
better place, by the example
of those who in times past,
defended and won freedom.
Amen.***

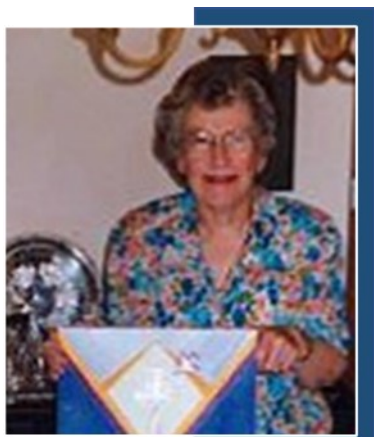
Graham and Caroline Penn

Celebrating the lives of . . .



Celebrating the Lives of Shirley, Marjorie and Ruth

Once they saw through a glass darkly,
 Now they see their risen Lord.
 Once they fought through tests and trials,
 Now they stand in faith's reward.
 Once they had but partial knowledge,
 Now they know as they are known.
 Once they walked a pilgrim's journey
 Now their feet are safely home.



Marjorie and Ruth

Shirley Forrest 24th October 1921 – 26th January 2021

Shirley and Dick Forrest were very much part of St Stephen's Presbyterian Church for many years

during the ministry of the Rev Graham Hardy. They attended the Sunday morning worship service, followed by hilarious lunches with close friends at an Italian restaurant afterwards. Dick held the role of Elder until his death in 1993.

They also belonged to the Continuity Group, spending many happy times joining in organised social activities such as the "Progressive Dinners". They also attended Gilbulla Conference week-ends away of fellowship and interesting discussions, as well as outings to Old Government House and other places of interest. Shirley was very active in charity work with both the Church and the Cronulla Lantern Club.

Shirley was a keen member of Dorcas, enjoying social afternoons with Don Harvie entertaining at the piano. She would also bring along her special homemade cakes and slices, aprons and beautifully knitted garments for sale at Market Day.

Shirley trained at Marrickville General Hospital, becoming a Triple Certificate nursing sister, and during World War 2, Shirley spent considerable time in charge of the TB Ward at Sydney Hospital.

Shirley loved her family, and enjoyed travelling with Dick overseas and locally, often with Church groups and friends.

In her later years it became too difficult for Shirley to travel to the city, so she joined Caringbah United Church. In 2008, Shirley moved to Melbourne to be nearer her children, grandchildren and her two great grandsons.

Judith Barton

Marjorie Rowlands 23rd November 1923 – 10th January 2021

Marjorie and Rolly Rowlands had a long association with St Stephen's Church during both the Rev Gordon Powell's and the Rev Graham Hardy's ministries. Marjorie was very much instrumental in creating the Handcraft Group, designing and overseeing "The Banner", usually displayed on the pedestal near the Regal Pews. This beautiful Banner in glorious colours of sky blue depicts the Uniting Church Dove made by Irene Frost and the Southern Cross, made by Faith McAskell.

The architects of St Stephen's were John Reid and Finlay Munro Jnr, and our church opened its doors on the 27th March, 1935. Marjorie was a member of the "Munro clan". She was mentioned at the Sesquicentenary Service held on the 22nd March 1992, in gratitude for her fine cover design for the Worship Guide, and for her creative spirit in providing furnishings and tablecloths.

Both Marjorie and Rolly enjoyed fellowship within the Church community, participating in different organised activities such as Bible Study, "Meet the Minister" evenings in various strategically situated homes and barbecues. They were both regular in attendance at the meetings of the Dorcas Society and the Continuity Group to hear invited speakers. Marjorie played a big part in helping the Fellowship and the Handcraft Groups become financially independent. These two groups contributed to the life and outreach programmes of St Stephen's, including Frontier Services and other needy causes at home and overseas.

Marjorie loved her family, her church community and her friends. She also enjoyed travelling to a variety of beautiful places. Marjorie's faith and warmth were sketched on her face and in her smile, and were reflected in her outstretched arms, ready to embrace others.

In her later years, Marjorie went into a Retirement Village in Cherrybrook. Each year, Marjorie would open her home for one of the monthly meetings of the Handcraft Group, serving up her famous home-made Scottish shortbread for afternoon tea.

Judith Barton

Ruth Ponniah 9th February 1933 – 12th May 2021

Ruth was born in Sri Lanka, one of a family of fifteen children. She emigrated alone to Sydney in 1975. One of her nieces, Nicolette Deva, recounts that over the years, Ruth was responsible for sponsoring a number of other family members who wished to live in Australia. Without Ruth's sponsorship, these family members (including Nicolette) would not be able today to call Australia home.

Ruth was a high school teacher of English for thirty years, and most of her teaching career was at St George Girls' High School. Ruth loved reading and especially enjoyed the classics: Jane Austen, the Bronte sisters and C S Lewis. She was passionate about teaching, and Nicolette remembers how particular she was about the correct pronunciation of words and the right usage of grammar.

Ruth was also keenly interested in the theatre, and she loved classical music and singing. In fact, Ruth entered a competition to write a fourth verse for the Australian national anthem, and she won this competition. The words she composed have continued to be used in some Christian schools and churches, and this fourth verse to "Advance Australia Fair" is also published in the Australian Hymn Book.

Another of Ruth's great loves was travelling the world. Every school holidays, Ruth would be off to some new and exotic location; she would come back from those trips laden with gifts for family members and friends.

Ruth joined the Combined Church Choirs for the annual presentation of Handel's "Messiah", and she would practise faithfully with this choir each year. She also sang alto in the St Stephen's Choir for many years, until travelling by public transport became too difficult, due to her limited mobility.

Ruth served St Stephen's faithfully as well through her editing of our church magazine "Vision" over a number of years. In addition to her church commitments, she found the time to support the Girl Guide movement.

All of the members of Ruth's extended family and her many friends will remember Ruth for her strong Christian faith. We will also remember and celebrate her ready smile, her laughter and her kind and generous spirit.

Janice Dawson

(I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ruth's niece Nicolette Deva and Sheena Wiard in writing this tribute to Ruth.)

How many baby photos did you get right??

1, 2, 3, 4

- 1 Margaret de la Garde
- 2 Judith Barton & Margaret Horscroft



- 3 Ken Day
- 4 Janice Dawson
- 5 Betty Jacobs

6 Sue Day

7 Caroline Penn

8 Geoff Greenwell

9 Graham Penn

10 Barbara Mallyon

11 Ron Mallyon

12 Nigel Tanner

13 Sheena Wiard

5, 6, 7, 8



9, 10, 11, 12, 13



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