



InSpire



NEWSLETTER OF THE STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH

Vol. 9, no 11

December 2023



“Today I am taking sides. I am taking the side of Peace”
(See poem on p. 11)

InSpiring

MINISTER'S MESSAGE



Epilogue

Take a moment to look at the painting of the cat. This painting is a gift to me from my friend David Pargeter. When he first painted it I commented how much I loved it, so he painted a second one, but this time gave the cat a touch of colour in the eyes. I love the textures, which you may pick up on the photo copy of the painting. But what do you see?

I see weatherboards, aged over time, worn colour, scuffed and rubbed back from the white paint, and even showing signs of the original grey timber. There is the obvious gap where the weatherboards have cracked and come away, creating a space and access to whatever is behind.

At first, I imagine the underneath of a weatherboard home, but maybe they are the boards of a bathing box at the beach, or an old shed on a farm? Whatever the structure, the aged boards have provided a safe haven for this cat from which it can view the world.

As I take time to look at the cat looking back at me, I am drawn to reflect on my own journey and story. I suspect that this cat has not always lived here, and maybe even was more engaged and part of a family or outer world. But it has retreated to behind the weatherboards and looks from this safe haven to the outside world, wondering if it is safe to come out, observing the life of others as they move past the dwelling, unaware that they are being observed.

Towards the conclusion of my first placement at Ewing Memorial, I realised I was becoming more an observer of the world. Being attentive to others, the words, feelings and thoughts of others, was becoming more natural to me. Developing awareness of what was going on beneath the surface of people's lives was an important practice for me. Through my work at the Juvenile Justice Centre I deepened my practice of observing, not passively, but as a means of engaging the world around. Observation led to awareness and awareness invited me to walk compassionately and empathically with people in ways that would transform and change my experience and knowledge of the world and myself.

Active observation takes its toll. And I found myself feeling quite insecure in the world, anxious and even untrusting of the world, and the church structures and processes. And so, I sought a move back to Ewing. I felt I had things to offer the community here again, but I also felt too insecure to trust being in another space.

And of course, this culminated in my episodic depression in 2016.

As I look back over the past 14 years, I am hopeful that there is a sense for you, even if in the

smallest of measures, that you have felt nurtured, free and able to explore faith and life without dogma, obligation or conformity. I am mindful as I look back that this community has been the safe weatherboard haven from which I have been able to look out at the world. Whether you have been aware of it or not, you have participated in a community that has provided me with a haven in which to be restored, and some looking points where I can check out whether I will be able to pop out from my hiding spot and play for a while with others.

I will be leaving this safe haven soon, and this old weatherboard gap will become a safe space for someone else. Maybe they won't need it as much as I did, or maybe they won't be as aware of their need for it as I was.

The last thing I wonder about this cat in the painting is, did it at one time belong to a family, but became a stray because it didn't fit in with the other cats? I certainly feel like a stray when it comes to the world of ordained ministers. I know I don't quite fit the norm; I am a square peg no longer trying to fit into a round hole. This might sound pessimistic to you, but it isn't. Because of the safe haven I have been able to shelter in, I have learned to value and accept and nurture this stray-ness, and I feel a little more courageous to step out from my hiding place now. I will still be cautious and wary of other cats, and other beings who won't understand or get me. And I will still become anxious and maybe even panicked sometimes.

But I will forever be grateful for the safe haven, the broken weatherboard shelter you have provided for me from which to observe the world and feel ok.

Peace

Greg

Final Service and Conclusion of Placement

Greg will conduct his final service on Christmas Day, but we will gather as a community one last time to conclude Greg's Placement on Sunday 28th January 2024. There will be no 10.30am service that Sunday. Instead, we will gather for a community celebration over Lunch in the church beginning at 12pm. Details to follow.

Please put the date in your diary now.

Conclusion of Placement and Farewell to Greg and Dana: Sunday 28th January 2024, 12pm

RSVP to Jane in the Office for Catering Purposes. 95714575

stonningtoncommunityuc@inet.net.au

PARTING AND TRANSITIONS ***John O'Donohue***

At any time, you can ask yourself: At which threshold am I now standing? At this time in my life, what am I leaving? Where am I about to enter? What is preventing me from crossing my next threshold? What gift would enable me to do it? A threshold is not a simple boundary; it is a frontier that divides two different territories, rhythms, and atmospheres. Indeed, it is a lovely testimony to the fullness and integrity of an experience or a stage of life that it intensifies toward the end into a real frontier that cannot be crossed without the heart being passionately engaged and woken up. At this threshold a great complexity of emotion comes alive: confusion, fear, excitement, sadness, hope. This is one of the reasons such vital crossings were always clothed in ritual. It is wise in your own life to be able to recognize and acknowledge the key thresholds: to take your time; to feel all the varieties of presence that accrue there; to listen inward with complete attention until you hear the inner voice calling you forward. The time has come to cross.

Excerpt from his books: *To Bless the Space Between Us* (US) / *Benedictus* (Europe)

MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Many readers will have already seen this article which circulated by email on 16 November to members of the Congregation as “SCUC Congregational Letter No1 – Ministerial Appointment Update”. It is included here in case some may not have seen it. – Ed.

SCUC Congregation members will be aware that Rev. Greg Crowe will soon conclude his placement as Minister of the Word with our congregation. Greg’s service will conclude at the end of January 2024 when his and Dana’s wonderful contribution to our congregation will be celebrated appropriately.

The process of filling our Ministerial Vacancy is prescribed by the Uniting Church of Australia’s Regulations and involves the congregation, our Presbytery, and Synod. Those regulations set out a six (6) step process which will take some time to proceed through. Whilst we have commenced this task, it is quite likely that the six step process will not be completed until some time after Greg’s departure.

The six steps are:

Step 1: We advise the Presbytery of the forthcoming vacancy (this has been done), and together with Presbytery representatives we document our congregation’s ministry and mission goals for the next five years. This documentation is termed a “mission study” and covers early issues including viability of the congregation and the gifts, qualities and skills sought in a Minister (a “Placement Profile”).

Step 2: The “Placement Profile” is approved by SCUC Council and then submitted to the Presbytery’s Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) for approval, after which the “Profile”

documentation is submitted to the Synod’s Placements Committee for formal listing.

Step 3: A Joint nominating committee (JNC) with both Presbytery and SCUC representatives is established. The JNC operates within clearly defined regulations in regard to quorums and confidentiality.

Step 4: The JNC works with the Placements Committee to prepare a short list of potential ministers taking into account suitability (guided by the “Profile”) and, obviously, availability. Suggestions for this “short list” may come from either SCUC or Presbytery members of the JNC and/or from the PRC.

Step 5: The JNC will commence “conversations” with short listed ministers, observing quorum and confidentiality regulations, and ensuring that PRC and Placements Committee are kept informed of progress. As these conversations narrow down to a preferred candidate (“the discernment that a Call is appropriate”), the preferred minister and the JNC will negotiate final points of agreement.

Step 6: Once final minister/JNC agreement has been reached, the decision is referred by the JNC to Presbytery for approval (usually by the Presbytery PRC). With that Presbytery approval, the decision is then referred to a full meeting of the SCUC congregation. With a two-thirds majority support from that meeting, a “Call for Placement” is issued to the minister who will commence placement according to dates and other terms negotiated in Step 5.

Whilst this process may strike readers as unwieldy and overly bureaucratic, it does ensure all stakeholders in the outcome have opportunities to influence and contribute to that outcome. Members of the SCUC congregation may find the confidentiality clause irksome but should be heartened by the Step 6 requirement of the Congregation approval.

Blessing service for Maggie Smailes

Greg conducted a beautiful service of blessing for Maggie Smailes on Sunday 26 November. Pictured here with her parents Chris and Catie and godparents Steph and Jesse.



STONNINGTON COMMUNITY UNITING CHURCH COUNCIL REPORT

Joyce Jenkin, Secretary

Council had been considering the suggestion that we could develop a labyrinth as a way of engaging with the community. Unfortunately, the cost would be prohibitive so the idea of a fountain or other water feature near to the oak tree is being investigated.

The process of engaging with Presbytery to work towards finding a new minister has begun.

Greg will be taking leave in January except for Sunday 28th when there will be the formal 'Cutting of Pastoral Ties' service and farewell lunch which will be held in the church commencing at 12 noon. We may possibly join with Armadale on Sunday 31st December. We will have a supply minister for the three Sundays in January that Greg is on leave.

The proposed kitchen refurbishment was discussed, particularly cost vs long term value. It was noted that it may be worth applying for a grant from Stonnington Council and / or the State and Federal Governments. Alan will take responsibility for running a 'special effort' from the congregation towards funding the project. Due to the high cost, the project will need to be approved by the UC Property Committee and hopefully it will be tabled at their next meeting on 14th December.

The next council meeting will be held on Wednesday, 21st February 2024 and in the interim, standing committee has been empowered to act on council's behalf.

KITCHEN REFURBISHMENT

The Church Council has approved a project to refurbish the Ewing Centre's kitchen. The kitchen is now over forty years old and, apart from the installation of the dishwasher and the recent replacement of the storage hot water service, has had no significant attention during that period. While it is still functional the cabinetry and appliances have deteriorated, are not up to modern ergonomic standards, and would not pass modern Building Regulations if built today.

The plan is to strip everything from the room other than the dishwasher, the instantaneous water heater, and the floor tiles. Then new cabinetry, a new electric induction cooktop and two ovens, a new rangehood, a new double bowl sink plus a separate hand basin, and LED lighting will be installed, and the room will be repainted. The general layout will be very similar to the existing arrangement including the island food preparation area. An important new feature will be that storage spaces for crockery, glassware, cutlery, and cooking utensils will be easy roll out drawers which will minimise reaching and bending and ease lifting when taking out or returning items. The end result will be that we will have an up-to-date semi-commercial kitchen

which will require little attention for the foreseeable future.

The work will be carried out early in the new year, probably in February. Plans for the project will be on display in the hall soon.

The estimated cost is \$75,000. It is planned that there will be a Special Effort appeal to cover a substantial part of this cost to which members of the Congregation and regular hirers will be invited to make a freewill gift. Alan Sandbach has kindly volunteered to organise the Special Effort.

Dick Carter

SOMETHING FOR THE SPIRIT

Lorna Henry

In November we had our final meeting for 2023. In the casual and sharing environment of the group, we tossed around our thoughts about the changes that have occurred in society over the past decades, part of which has been the declining role of the church in public life.

Coming at it from the point of view of seeing increasing individualist behaviour in public, we pondered the causes. Is it the absence of the Christian message of 'love your neighbour' in many people's lives? Is it the busyness and stress of modern life that causes people to focus on looking after themselves? Did earlier generations just have it easier and so were more outwardly focussed?

Of course, a small group like ours can find no answers and we don't presume to. However, what we do is to share our thoughts, to listen to each other and hopefully learn to see others' points of view, even when they are very different from our own. That was amply demonstrated at our last meeting.

From our backgrounds we hold in our minds the life and teachings of Jesus, and try now to see what these mean in our contemporary lives.

Thank you to all who participate, contributing your thoughts and experiences to enrich our lives.

One important note! This November meeting was the last one attended by our minister Greg. He has played a large role in the group! Thank you, Greg, for your support and generosity of spirit in the sharing of your thoughts and experience over all these years. We will miss you very much and hope you find a welcoming group in Queenscliff!

Our next meeting will be on the third Sunday in February 2024.

We wish you all a blessed Christmas time and a Happy Healthy New Year.

LIBRARY NEWS

Faye Pattinson

Our final Book Chat for the year was held on November 30. Books from that Chat will be listed next year. Meanwhile here are a few that were shared at the October Book Chat.

"A Shadow in Moscow" by Katherine Reay. A betrayal at the highest level risks the lives of two courageous female spies: MI6's best Soviet spy and the CIA's newest Moscow recruit. As the KGB closes in, a compromise must be struck if either woman hopes to survive.

"Lioness" by Sue Brierley. The extraordinary untold story of Sue Brierley, mother of Saroo, the boy known as Lion, who inspired the motion picture LION.

"From Gangland to Promised Land" by John Pridmore. He was a serious "face" in London's East End. His jackets were tailored to hold his machete and knuckledusters. His drug deals made him wealthy. He nearly killed a man outside a nightclub, but then something extraordinary happened...His powerful story reveals God's mercy and has inspired hundreds of thousands to grow in their faith.

“500 Miles from You” by Jenny Coglan. What happens when two medical professionals— an ex-Army medic from a village in the Scottish Highlands and a nurse from inner-city London— switch jobs for three months and become unlikely pen pals?

All were interesting titles.

New book for the Library

“Even the Devil quotes Scripture” by Robyn J Whitaker.

“Robyn Whitaker looks to the Bible as a guide to interpreting the Bible, and her findings breathe new life into our understanding and use of Scripture. As it turns out, the uses of Scripture within Scripture are flexible, open to frequent reinterpretation, and rarely literal.”

Reminder: anyone is welcome to peruse the library in the Margaret McKinnon Room and borrow a book, recording your name in the borrowing book at the bottom of the cabinet.

We will resume Book Chats early in 2024 so watch this space!!

Ed. – I hear that Faye has recently published a children’s book *The Leaf*, a private edition! Illustrations are by Maree Burnett’s brother. Congratulations, Faye! One lucky person has purchased a copy at the Op Table on November 19th!

AFTERNOON FELLOWSHIP OPPORTUNITY TABLE

Lencie Harding

The final gathering of Afternoon Fellowship for the year was hosted by Greg and Dana in the Manse on November 20th with a strong Christmas theme. Thank you as always Dana and Greg for your hospitality.

Treasurer, Jan Riches, has reported that \$362.30 was raised by the Op Table held on Sunday 19th November. This amount includes most generous donations from two lovely ladies.

Thank you to Faye Pattinson for donating for sale a copy of her recently published children’s book which was illustrated by Maree Burnett’s brother and to Maree for making a number of beautiful greeting cards for sale.

Thank you to everyone who has generously supported the Op Table during the year with special thanks to everyone who contributed their delicious cooking for sale.

Incidentally, Dale Barker-Harrington of Uniting has thanked the members of our congregation for purchasing 38 packs of Christmas cards for \$418 to support the work of Uniting.

Note from Jan Riches

The success of the sales from the Afternoon Fellowship’s Opportunity Table, held after the church service on the third Sunday each month, is mainly due to the organisational skills and hard work of our wonderful secretary, Lencie Harding. The Rev Greg Crowe has kindly set up the tables in the Hall and Lencie has herself often baked biscuits and slices for sale, encouraged others to cook tasty items for sale, and arranged all the goods for sale on the tables. She has also been the main sales person on the Opportunity Table throughout this year.

As a member of the Afternoon Fellowship I wish to thank Lencie for her contribution towards our very successful fund-raising in 2023.

Jan Riches
Afternoon Fellowship Treasurer

From Lencie:

Christmas Prayer by Robert Louis Stevenson



Loving Father,

help us remember the birth of Jesus

That we may share in the song of angels,

The gladness of the shepherds,

And the worship of the wise men.

Close the door of hate and open the
door of love all over the world.

Let kindness come with every
gift and good desires with every greeting.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ
brings,

And teach us to be merry with clean hearts.

May the Christmas morning make us happy to
be thy children.

And the Christmas evening bring us to our beds
with grateful thoughts.

Forgiving and forgiven,

For Jesus' sake. Amen

SAMMY STAMP

Lencie Harding

Thank you to Olywn Syle for dropping in a package of stamps from her Probus Club friends and to Sue McGrath, her sister-in-law and neighbour who are regular Sammy Stamp contributors.

I will be making a final delivery for the year to the Sammy Stamp volunteers this month.

There is no report from Allan Clark this month for personal reasons but I know that he would want to thank you for supporting the Sammy Stamp Ministry this year.

From Lencie:

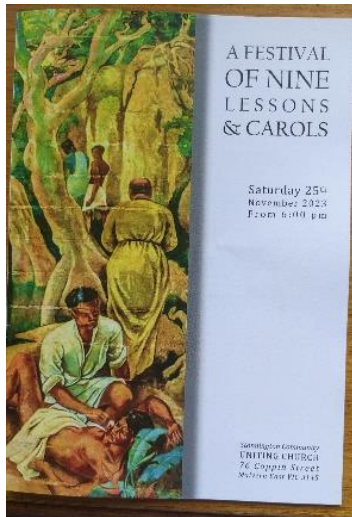
Olwyn Syle called in recently with some stamps for Sammy from her Probus friends. She has been having a busy year with Ron in and out of hospital. He is now at Carbrini Brighton for rehab. Their two children Jenny and Peter are very supportive. Olwyn sends her best wishes to the congregation but doesn't know when she'll be able to return to church.



This beautiful photo of Olwyn, a volunteer at the Malvern East, Waverley Road Op Shop for many years, is on the cover of the Spring edition of Mecwacare Matters.

Errol Fernando

We have become accustomed to Errol's sensitive and imaginative playing for our worship services once a month, ever since the amalgamation with Serrell St in 2016.



However, he showed another aspect of his talents on November 25th when he directed the music for a Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, continuing a tradition of his alma mater, Trinity College, Kandy, Sri Lanka. This tradition dates from 1946, and it has been carried on by old

Trinitians in Melbourne for the past 25 years. The choir of perhaps 25 singers including children from the age of three, and men and women, most of the men sporting the school tie. They sang beautifully in unison and harmony, in English and Tamil.



Some carols were sung in hearty unison by the whole choir and others were delivered in dulcet harmonies by a small group. Some were exquisite solos. Congratulations, Errol!



COMMON THREADS

Our final meeting for the year had a good turnout of regulars and we welcomed two new members. We finished with a light lunch in the Margaret McKinnon Room.



Rugs joined up by Jo, Dawn, Anne and Barbara were shown and admired.



Sue's rug of squares she had knitted all herself was especially praised. With others that have been completed during the month, they will be delivered to KOGO for distribution to various charities.

Our first meeting for 2024 will be held on Thursday 25 January, and over the summer break a number of us will be joining squares into rugs for KOGO, in preparation for next winter!

For further information or suggestions, contact Alison Tokita by emailing

fuyusona57@gmail.com

PEOPLE'S CHOIR SOIRÉE 31 OCTOBER

The People's Choir directed by Bettina Spivakovsky held an exciting Soirée on Halloween, as part of the City of Stonnington Seniors Festival. Greg and four members of the Congregation played an active part and were impressed with the energetic community participation, attracting possibly 200 people. It was an inclusive, safe, fun and supportive event,

bringing together a diverse range of people. In effect, the church became a Sacred Space for a Secular people!



The church and hall looked great with different coloured lights adding to the effect of the stained glass windows in the church.



Carol Service - Sunday 17th December at 7.00pm

A reminder that our service of Lessons and Carols will be followed by a Christmas Supper.

Please consider bringing a contribution for the Supper table. Last year was a fun and happy time following a meaningful and joyful service.

Please come and bring your friends and family.

Poem For Peace By Rabbi Irwin Keller

17 October 2023

“Today I am taking sides.
I am taking the side of Peace.
Peace, which I will not abandon
even when its voice is drowned out
by hurt and hatred,
bitterness of loss,
cries of right and wrong.
I am taking the side of Peace
whose name has barely been spoken
in this winnerless war.
I will hold Peace in my arms,
and share my body’s breath,
lest Peace be added
to the body count.
I will call for de-escalation
even when I want nothing more
than to get even.
I will do it
in the service of Peace.
I will make a clearing
in the overgrown
thicket of cause and effect
so Peace can breathe
for a minute
and reach for the sky.
I will do what I must
to save the life of Peace.
I will breathe through tears.
I will swallow pride.
I will bite my tongue.
I will offer love
without testing for deservingness.
So don’t ask me to wave a flag today
unless it is the flag of Peace.
Don’t ask me to sing an anthem
unless it is a song of Peace.
Don’t ask me to take sides
unless it is the side of Peace.”

TEARFUND

It is Advent and TEARFUND time again.

Every Sunday before Christmas, DEC. 3, 10, 17, 24, the TEARFUND STALL IN THE HALL will be there to offer you the chance to purchase Useful Gift cards for Christmas giving,

OR

to make a donation to our Big Useful Gift to TEARFUND

Most of us know how it works: You buy a card, give it to someone to let them know you have given a gift to people who really need it. That might be some chickens, primary school books, a health clinic, a clean water supply, a toilet or seeds for a vegetable garden. The prices vary from \$5 up to nearly \$2000 for a well and water supply to a village.

The latter is beyond the reach of most of us! However, for several years now we have collected for a general donation from the church community. And every time we have managed to provide that water supply! - sometimes even more.

So, once again this year, you are invited to make a donation to our communal gift in the weeks before Christmas. And of course, you are welcome also to buy as many of the smaller gift cards as you like.

TEARFUND is an old and trusted Christian overseas aid organisation, working only with

trusted agencies on the ground in the receiving countries.

And this is the 21st year of the TEARFUND Advent Program in our church community.

Your generosity in this parish is remarkable. The staff at the Melbourne office of TEARFUND have long been aware of the amazing level of support from SCUC. We know why we do it: we are living out the great commandment to love one another.

We look forward to seeing you in the hall after the church service over the next four Sundays!

OR - another option: you may call Lorna at any time on 0425 755 807 to ask for a catalogue, order cards or make a donation. She will be happy to deliver them!

Thank you in anticipation for your support of TEARFUND!

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you for your support during the year. Please feel free to send me news items and photos for *InSpire*. We also welcome articles, so if you feel inspired, do write about any topic of interest to you to share with our readers. Letters to the Editor are also welcome.

Deadline for the **February 2024** edition of *InSpire* is **Monday, 29th January**. Articles should be emailed to the Editor Alison Tokita at fuyusona57@gmail.com where possible, or they can be given in person.

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CALENDAR DECEMBER 2023

SUNDAY 3RD	11 AM	EUCCHARIST & COMMUNITY LUNCH
SUNDAY 10TH	10.30 AM	CHURCH SERVICE
SUNDAY 17TH	10.30 AM 7.00 PM	CHURCH SERVICE CHRISTMAS CAROL SERVICE
SUNDAY 24TH	10.30 AM	CHURCH SERVICE
MONDAY 25TH	9.00 AM	CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE
SUNDAY 31ST		CHURCH SERVICE TBC

ROSTERS DECEMBER 2023

STEWARDS:

Sunday 3rd Heather Carter & Doug Connell
 Sunday 10th Kerrie Davies, Peter Grossman Terry Trewavas & Alan Sandbach
 Sunday 17th Richard & Sue Nelson, Luke Leembruggen
 Sunday 24th Graeme Lord, Jill & Barry Rogers & Alison Tokita
 Sunday 31st Clare Pilcher, Anne & Michael Read

MORNING TEA:

Sunday 10th Joyce Jenkin and Dana Crowe
 Sunday 17th Anne & Michael Read
 Sunday 24th Volunteers